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Wild Nat, the Trooper.



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BOOKLET NO. 1

WILD CAT, THE TROOPER

WM. R. Eyster -

BY WILLIAM R. EYSTER

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WILD NAT, THE TROOPER;

OR,

THE CEDAR SWAMP BRIGADE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CEDAR SWAMP BRIGADE.

BY WILLIAM R. EYSTER.

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WILD NAT, THE TROOPER; OR, THE CEDAR SWAMP BRIGADE.

CHAPTER I.

CATHERINE VALE.

THERE was a time in the history of our country when the stoutest hearts were filled with despair. The defeat of General Gates, followed by the overrunning of the Carolinas, the treachery of Benedict Arnold, and the general bad condition of our army, did not, certainly, tend to cheer those thousands of noble souls earnestly praying for the success of the American cause. It is of that period, of that darkest hour, which precedes the day, that we purpose to write.

Toward the close of a long, disagreeable day, two women sat by the fireside of a dwelling some fifteen or eighteen miles from Charleston. The two presented a contrast, indeed, even though their features were alike. One was an elderly woman, with hair sprinkled with threads of gray, though she yet retained much of her early beauty. The other was a young girl, whose age could not have exceeded nineteen. Although not absolutely beautiful, there was that about her which made her fascinating. With features finely molded, and a graceful carriage, her figure was a model of physical grace and perfectness. Her hair was of that golden hue, so seldom seen save in poet's dreams. Her voice was as musical and clear as the notes of a flute. Not in all that land of fair women could be found a more truly lovable woman than Catherine Vale.

Catherine and her mother were conversing earnestly together.

"It is not for me, Kate, to judge of the heart of a man; to say that this one is to be trusted, and that one not, without an acquaintance of longer standing than that between myself and young Ernshaw. Without having heard that he was vicious, it has often been told me that he was of unsettled disposition; that he is known to the neighbors as 'Wild Nat.' Such a name would never have been given a man of reliable and good character."

"Whatever you advise, mother, that will I do; for your wish is law, with me."

"Do not speak of law, Kate; all I do is for your own happiness. If I thought you would be happy with Nat Ernshaw, I would advise you to receive his addresses; as it is, I say *wait*. Be not too hasty, for time and circumstances will do much to place all things in their true light."

"I will, mother; I will try him, and prove the strength of his affection. These are perilous times, and times, too, that bring out the good in a man's character, if there is any good in it; and something *may* happen which will give you more favorable impressions of Nat Ernshaw, than you appear to entertain now."

Catherine turned away and busied herself with her household duties. Mrs. Vale gazed with pride upon her daughter, and sorrowfully murmured, "It would be a sad thing for my dear child to throw herself away on such a fellow as 'Wild Nat.'"

Mrs. Vale's husband had been dead some fifteen years. He left her the legacy of two fair children, upon whom all her hopes were centered. The son had now grown to be the hardy man of two-and-twenty, and Kate, the belle of the region, had, for several years, been among the young women sought for by the beaux of the country.

Nat Ernshaw had been on intimate terms with the family for some years, and had long cherished a feeling of great regard for Kate. He had an unpleasant reputation, however, among the more staid in the neighborhood. Not that he was absolutely vicious, or wedded to habits of dissipation, for he was neither; but he had a number of, to say the least, negative qualities, which made that prudent and self-pious class who have the morals of every community in their keeping,

predict that he would never come to any good. Catherine was slow, however, to credit either the reports of the busy-bodies, or the prophecies of the elder ones, for she had a woman's subtle intuitions, sharpened by a cool, clear judgment, and she was fully conscious of all the lights and shades in Nat's not well-defined character. That he was one of those who let their good qualities remain latent until called out by some important crisis, she perfectly realized; and she had full faith in the future. The word "wait" had no terrors in it. She therefore resolved to abide by her promise; but, like an upright, conscientious girl that she was, she also resolved that Nathaniel should know how she felt toward him; if he could satisfy Mrs. Vale, and prove his affection real, and his character above reproach, she would have no objection to receive him as her accepted lover, and future husband.

The frugal meal was at last ready. Catherine moved toward the door, but before she reached it, the latch was raised, and a tall, straight, well-featured young man entered.

"Sit down, John; Kate was just going to call you to supper."

"All right, mother; I feel hungry enough; and, after awhile, I want to go over to Squire Stoddart's. I will be back early, though. I guess you and Kate will not be afraid to be left alone for a little while."

Mrs. Vale smiled as she answered, "I think not; but, John, it seems to me that you want to see Squire Stoddart rather often. What has he got that is so attractive? Can't you enlighten us?"

"Certainly, mother, if you will tell me that you are really ignorant, and ask for the sole purpose of finding out what it is, and not to plague me."

"I can't say that; so I suppose we will scarcely get the requested information from you. Mary Stoddart is a fine girl, John; and, if the country ever gets settled down, I would have no objection to calling her daughter; but, now-a-days, marrying and giving in marriage, are things which had best be deferred."

"If we wait till the country gets settled, I am afraid we will all be old and gray-headed. I am not one of those who believe in deferring to some future time what can be done

now; and as soon as Mary will consent, you shall call her daughter. I know you will have no objections."

Running on in this manner, the three kept up the conversation until the meal was over; then John, after finishing up his evening's work, wended his way in the direction of Mr Stoddart's.

Hardly half an hour had elapsed, when the sound of a horse, coming at a full gallop along the road, was heard. The traveler, whoever he was, reined in at the widow's door. Dismounting, he tied his horse to a tree. To the surprise of Mrs. Vale, who had answered the knock, the person was none other than Nat Ernshaw. She greeted him kindly:

"Come in, Nathaniel; come in. We have seen no one who could give us any news for over a week; and, as you seem to have come from Charleston, you can tell us what is going on."

"I am ready enough to come in; but as for giving you any news of what is going on in Charleston, it is something I am unable to do. I haven't seen the inside of the place for three or four weeks, and I don't expect to see it until these Britishers are driven out."

The good dame closed the door as he entered, and motioned him to a seat.

"I'm much obliged to you, Mrs. Vale; but, to tell the truth, I hardly have time to sit down. I called to see John, and have a few minutes' talk with him. If you could tell me where I can find him, I will look for him, as I see he is not in the house."

"What do you want of him, Nat? I am afraid you want to lead him into some mischief."

"I can not say whether you will call it mischief or not; I am willing to tell you what I wish to do, and I think you will approve of it. These are stirring times, Mrs. Vale, and it's the duty of every one to do something for the country. The wolf is at our doors, and it's our duty to drive him away. A number of us are about organizing a troop to fight for our homes and liberty. I know that you and John believe, as I do, that the colonies are in the right; and I came over to-night to see if I could not get John to join us. Every one is joining one side or the other; and, unless we make a vigorous stand *now*, it will soon be too late."

"Nathaniel," said the widow, "you know that John is the main support of my old age; that he and Catherine are all that keeps me here. Were they gone, I would not wish for life. Is not the cause of freedom hopeless? Have not our countrymen been beaten at all points? Is there a chance of success left to hang a single hope on? What good, then, will it do for John to risk his life for the sake of continuing a little longer a struggle which must soon end disastrously?"

"While there is life there is hope," as the doctors say, Mrs. Vale. You speak truly, when you say the case is desperate; but that it is hopeless, I deny. While there remains a thousand swords and a thousand stout arms to wield them—while there are a thousand brave hearts that pant for liberty, and liberty only, the cause of American Independence will not be given up without a last grand struggle. We *must* be successful; and, though our lives are given to establish the nationality of the colonies, the sacrifice must not be grudged."

"Nathaniel Emerson, you speak like a patriot, and you must feel like one. I but tried you when I spoke of our cause as hopeless. John is anxious to go to the fray; but his love for me has kept him at home. He shall be kept here no longer. Count on him as one of the company, and, if he falls fighting for liberty and his country, think not I will ever reproach you for having asked him to enter the paths of danger?"

"I thought you would feel so, and I believe John is as enthusiastic as yourself; but his love for you had kept him from joining the army, knowing that, at any moment, he might be ordered away from you. Now the case is different. The foe is in our midst. We can see them from our own door steps, and we *must* battle for the defence of our firesides."

At this moment, Catherine, who had been in the other room, entered. With a pleasant "Good evening," she shook hands, and, taking a seat, she resumed the knitting which she had relinquished to prepare supper.

From a discussion of the state of the country, Nathaniel turned to talk of other matters, spoke of what was going on about them, and thus passed a pleasant half-hour. Finally, he rose from his seat, remarking:

"To tell the truth, I must leave now, although I should

love well enough to stay here a little while longer. If I was certain that John would be home soon, I should wait for him: but, as it is, I think I shall ride over to Squire Stoddart's—where I take it he is—and have a few words with him. It is important that I speak about the organization now, as we will hold a meeting to-morrow night."

Catherine accompanied the young man to the door, and remained talking with him for some time. When she returned, the color had risen in her face, but she quietly took her seat, while the clattering along the road told that Ned was making all possible speed in the direction of the squire's.

CHAPTER II.

THE TORY SPY.

No man is so base as he who deliberately takes up arms against his own country. Such an one is fit for any deed, however mean, cowardly, or wicked. Unfortunately, traitors have been found in every country, in all times; nor were they wanting during the American Revolution. When there were a number of honorable men who, believing that the colonies were wrong in revolting from the king, did not take up arms against them, on the other hand there were numbers of base, sordid wretches, who were willing to cling to any side so that it was the strongest—to support any cause so that it was one which promised them booty. Such a one was Timothy Turner, who followed the fortunes of the British, who was devoted to their interests, who had, in short, sold to them his very soul and body for paltry gold.

Although the character of this young man was not fully known, yet suspicion rested upon him, and the Whigs had formed unfavorable conclusions which were not long wanting a justification. He lived in a small cabin, about half or three-quarters of a mile from Mr. Stoddart's; and, though ostensibly he supported himself by tilling a small patch of ground, yet the dullest mind must have perceived that a support from such a spot was simply an impossibility.

On this night, Timothy Turner was wending his way home from a tavern which stood on the road about three-quarters of a mile from his house. As he turned from the door, he thought he heard the sounds of a rapidly approaching horseman. Pausing for a moment, to see whether his ears did not deceive him, he discovered the dusky figure of the rider. As he passed the tavern, and by the light which streamed from the door, Turner caught sight of the man. It was Nathaniel Ernschaw.

"Ha! curse him, what is *he* doing, riding about at this time of night? It's no good Wild Nat is after; blast him, if I could but lay my hands on his carcass, I would show him a touch of my nature. If ever I get the chance, he shall pay dear for what he has done."

The ruffian kept on his journey down the road, straining his eyes to follow the fast-flitting figure before him. When Ernschaw came to the lane which led in to Mr. Stoddart's dwelling, he reined in his horse, and, dismounting, threw open the gate. Turner, who had followed as closely as possible, on seeing the the direction of Nat's errand, steadily drew near to the spot.

Nathaniel drew up to the house, and knocked on the door. The knocking brought a middle-aged man to the door. Holding a candle above his head, he took a careful survey of the visitor.

"Why, Nat, is it you?" said the squire. "What brings you here at this time of night? Come in."

"No, I thank you, squire. For once in my life I have business to attend to. I was over to see John Vale, but found that he was not home. If he is here I wish you would ask him to step to the door for a few minutes. I have something important to say to him."

"Well, he's here, here enough; and if you won't come in, why I will have to send him out—that is, if he is willing."

The old squire then entered the house again, to make Nat's requisition known to the son of his neighbor. Timothy Turner had, in the mean time, approached to within hearing distance, and now stood ready to note every word that was uttered. He scented gold and revenge in the issue of that interview.

John Vale soon made his appearance. The two young men shook each other cordially by the hand. The conversation

tion which ensued it is unnecessary to detail. Every word of it was overheard by the spy. When, at length, John expressed his determination of joining the company which his friend was raising, Turner rubbed his hands in high glee, as he muttered to himself:

"You shall find out, Mr. John Vale, and you, Mr. Nathaniel Ershaw, that Timothy Turner is not the proper man to slight. This intelligence is worth ten golden guineas to me, and the revenge besides."

"As my mother approves of it, I'm with you, Nat. When and where do we meet? Let me know the rendezvous, and trust me but I'll be there."

"There was some talk," replied Nat, "of meeting in the swamp, but that is too far for the most of us. So that is out of the question; but you know Clineburn's mills and the pine woods that run back from the creek. If you enter the woods by the path immediately opposite the mill, you will find a small clearing. That is the spot. Be on hand by ten o'clock to-morrow night, and I promise you that your eyes will be gaddened by the sight of thirty young men, all good, stout patriots—ready, if need be, to die for their country."

"And I can assure you," said Turner, to himself, "that you'll see the greater part of them do so, unless something very unexpected prevents it."

"You can depend on me, Nat," said John. Again checking his horse, Ershaw mounted his horse, and galloped away.

Turner waited until the clatter had died away, and then silently hastened in the direction of his dwelling. Arriving there, he sought the shed which covered his horse. Hurriedly saddling the beast, he rode off toward the city of Charleston, twenty miles distant.

Gen. Clifton, the military commander in Charleston, had scarcely arisen, on the following morning, when his servant announced a man waiting to speak with him.

"Who is he?" was the general's inquiry.

"He says that his name is Turner—that he rode twenty miles last night to bring you an important piece of news."

"Turner? Then I think I know the man. He is one of those fiery hounds we find it necessary to use. I'll vouch for it, he is planning some piece of rascality. Admit him."

The servant retired and returned with Turner. Gen. Clinton surveyed the fellow for a moment, then addressed him rather sharply:

"How now, sir? What have you to say? It should be something of importance to cause you to journey so far and fast."

"It is of importance," rejoined Turner. "I heard at a late hour, last night, of a meeting of rebels which is to take place this night. There will be thirty or forty of them, and their purpose is to form a brigade to act with Marion, Sumpter and others. I know the names of but two; but, if the rest of the men are as good as they, the band may do much injury to the king's cause."

"What are the names of those two of whom you speak?"

"Nathaniel Ernschaw and John Vale—two most desperate men, and fit to do any thing against the followers of the king."

"Ernschaw? I have heard that name before—where, I can not say. This thing shall be attended to. I will see that measures are taken to cut them off; but where is this meeting to be held?"

"About twenty miles from here there is a building called Clingman's mill. In a wood immediately behind this the rebels are to assemble. I will lead any troops which you may send to the spot."

"How many of them did you say that there would be?"

"Between thirty and forty. Whether they will be armed or not, I can not say, but I do not think they will be. Some of them may have their rifles, but I have no doubt fifty of your men could take the whole of them alive."

"Be in readiness, then, to act as guide. Or stay; I will see you again this morning. Come an hour before noon. If your intelligence proves correct you shall receive a suitable reward."

Gen. Clinton rang the bell for his servant to show the tory out. The man who performed this duty was a negro whom Gen. Clinton had received into his service since his arrival in Charleston. He was an intelligent-looking black, who had ingratiated himself into favor, and now seemed to be almost a necessity with the general.

As Sampson opened the door for the exit of Turner, he

charged his shoulders in a manner which told that it was displeasing to him to be compelled to do any service for such a man. Hardly had the body of the tory crossed the threshold ere the door was violently closed behind him. The black returned to his master, and busied himself preparing for his master's breakfast. Having partaken of this meal, Gen. Clinton left the house, turning his footsteps in the direction of a dwelling inhabited by a rich and influential tory.

Sampson passed quickly out by the back door, and, crossing the garden, emerged from it into the street. Walking rapidly along for some squares, he at length turned into a somewhat obscure alley. A few steps brought him to the front of an humble looking dwelling, at whose door he gave a few taps. His summons was quickly answered, and a middle-aged woman threw open the door.

"Is it you, Sampson?" said she. "What brings you here at this time of day? Any thing important?"

"I guess mebbe it is. Whar is Simon? I got suthin' to tell 'm."

"Simon is here, if you would see him; so come in."

The black entered the cabin, and found himself in the presence of the person he was seeking, an honest looking mechanic, whose eye and bearing betokened the fearless man.

"Whatever brings you here must be of importance, Sampson; so tell us at once," said the mechanic, or Simon Hunt, as was his name.

"Thar' ar' no one here who oughtn't to har a secret, is thar'?"

"Trust me for not harboring any such about my house."

"Listen, then. This mornin' that Timothy Turner came to see the general, an' tell him 'bout a meetin' o' whigs that was to be hold to night, and so the general 'I send down a lot o' his soldiers and chop 'em all up. If you kin send 'em word you'll be doin' a good thing for de blessed cause."

"All right' where is this meetin' to be hold, and who is to hold it? I must know who to send word to. Give me that, and they shall know the game before night."

"He on'y knows two—they be Masser John Vale and Nat Ernshaw."

"What? Nat Ernshaw turning whig trooper? That's

unexpected, but I always thought there was good in the fellow, if he only had a chance and would show it. I'll send my boy straight off. If he puts the spurs to the old team's sides he ought to get to Emshaw's before dinner. Then they have the whole afternoon in which to warn the boys not to come to the meeting. The two that were mentioned, though, will have to keep dark, or they will find the country too hot for them."

"Well, Nat kin take care on himself. Take smarter man can do Britishers to catch him a-sleep; and he take kear o' Massa John, too; but I think I better go. It might 'ear s'picious if any one see me here. Good mornin'!"

"Good morning," answered Hunt. "There goes a noble fellow," continued he, speaking to his wife. "This is the third time he has brought important intelligence of the movements of the British. Where is Simon? He must start directly."

CHAPTER III.

GOING OUT TO SHEAR, AND RETURNING SHORN.

It was about one o'clock in the afternoon, when fifty British soldiers, under the guidance of Timothy Turner, set out for the rendezvous of the Whig partisans, going with the avowed intention of "driving them like sheep before them into Charleston, or else leave their mangled carcasses to rot on the spot where they fell."

Plenty of time was before them, for the troop was well-mounted and could get over the distance in a few hours; but there was danger of getting to the spot too soon. Well acquainted with the roads thereabouts, the tory determined to lead the men by a circuitous and rather unfrequented route, which, though it was some miles farther, afforded this advantage—none of the whigs would thus see the body of horse, and consequently, could not give the alarm which should prevent the patriot muster from taking place. By it, too, he could

penetrate through the pines and station the whole force so as to surround his unsuspecting countrymen.

Having settled his mind on this point, Timothy took the lead, mounted on a fine horse furnished him for the occasion, --his own being too fatigued by his morning's journey to permit him to take the field with it.

John Vale was just sitting down to his dinner when the boy Simon reached his house, bearing the important message with which he was intrusted. John immediately recognized the lad, for he had often seen him before. Judging that he had some very special news to tell, he rose from his seat and followed the lad into the yard.

"If you have any thing to tell, speak out, Simon."

"Father sent me here to tell you to warn every one not to go to the meeting in the pines back of Clingman's mill."

"Indeed," responded John, with an accent of astonishment. "Can you tell me how your father learned a meeting was to be held there? I did not know of it myself until late last night."

"Timothy Turner found out about it, and rode over to Charleston last night. He had a talk with General Clinton, and the general is going to send forty or fifty soldiers to take you all. Sampson, the servant of the general, heard Turner telling General Clinton about it; so he told father, and father sent me down here to tell you and Nat Ershaw. You are to tell the rest, so the Britishers will have their ride for their pains."

"Your father has done well, and you're a patriotic fellow to take so long a ride to warn us of our danger. Come into the house and get some dinner, then we'll go over to Ershaw's together."

Simon was tired, and a good hearty meal was most acceptable. When he had done, the young man took down his rifle and powder-horn from the looks, and swung them over his shoulder, then, turning to his mother, he remarked:—

"Perhaps you will not see me again to-day, perhaps not for weeks. From what I hear, there is a good chance for us to begin the campaign, and when we once take to the field, there is no telling how long we shall be compelled to keep it. Remember, though, that I am fighting, as is my duty, for my country, and if I die, that I die in a good cause."

"You know, John, that I love you and would do anything to shield you from harm or danger; but I rejoice to see you going. The nation has need of such as you—those with strong arms and brave hearts. Go, and may our Heavenly Father guard and bless you."

John kissed her and his sister, then left the house, turning to the stable. He soon led out his gallant steed. Meantime, he led the way to Nat Ernshaw's. Nat was at home, and catching sight of the two at a distance, surmised that they had important business with him.

"What's in the wind now, John?" inquired Nat. "Simon Filby, there, looks as though he had been riding all morning, and, I guess, if the truth be told, he was—"

"Matter enough. He has ridden from Charleston this evening for the express purpose of saving us all from capture or slaughter. Relate to Nathaniel the message which your father instructed you to deliver."

The boy proceeded to repeat his story and message. Nathaniel was astounded; it seemed to him incomprehensible how Turner had obtained his intelligence concerning the contemplated meeting.

"There is something strange about this," said he. "There can hardly be a traitor among us, and how else the secret could have leaked out I am unable to say. I particularly cautioned them not to speak of it even among themselves. But stay! I think I have it now. You say that Turner arrived this morning?"

"Yes, sir!" answered Simon.

"Now that I think of it, I have the impression that I caught a glimpse of him coming out of the Royal Arms, last night, as I passed on my way to Squire Stadilart's. He may have followed, and by making up, may have heard the conversation that took place between you and I. We have no time to lose. There is much for us to do."

"I agree with you," responded Vale. "It would be well for us to hold a consultation. I think that, if rightly managed, we can turn this to advantage. Our troop can be, at the best, but poorly armed and mounted. To be of any great service, both of these defects must be remedied. Here is the opportunity!"

"By heavens! you are right. If we could capture or disperse this force that is to be sent against us, we could secure what we most need, horses and arms. Besides, it would give the men confidence. Here is a list of names," continued Ernsshaw, drawing a paper from his pocket; "do you hurry and see the fifteen whose names are first on that paper. Tell them the particulars, let them know the force that is coming, and then fix a rendezvous at the Black Rock, a mile this side of the mill. They must be there at sundown, armed. Leave your ride here, for you will be back again before night. You are well mounted, don't spare your horse. As for Simon, here, he had better stay until his nag is rested, then get back to Charleston as soon as possible. He might be missed."

It was by no means a light task to accomplish, this visiting thirty persons at so many different houses; leaving it undone might prove fatal. With their patriotic enthusiasm kindled, they bent themselves to their duty. Every one with whom the young patriots spoke felt as they did. An opportunity was now offered to strike for their country, and they were willing to seize it.

Such was the expedition used, that John Vail had returned to Nat's, and was conversing with old Mr. Ernsshaw by five o'clock; half an hour later Nat himself returned.

In answer to Vale's question—"How did you succeed?" he answered:—

"Oh, admirably. Not one has shown any signs of backing out. If your success has been equal to mine, thirty as resolute fellows as ever looked through the sights of a rifle, or wielded a broadsword, will be assembled at Black Rock by sundown."

Near the hour of sunset, an observer, had he been stationed near the Black Rock—a spot so called from a huge black rock which lifted its head from the waters of Cedar Creek—might have noted the approach of a number of young men, all hurrying in one direction. Some were mounted, and others were on foot; all bore weapons of one kind or another—rifles, muskets, fowling-pieces, and a few swords.

They came, too, from every direction, by twos and threes, talking together, and apparently discussing some important

question. When the sun had finally disappeared and the twilight had settled over all like a friendly cloak, thirty-two men were gathered on the banks of Cedar Creek: among the number were Nathaniel Ernsbaw and John Vale. The majority of the company were young men, none of them over thirty,—all broad-shouldered, deep-chested, bronzed with exposure to the weather, and as spirited as the winds which played over their hills and valleys.

Ernsbaw addressed his companions—stating that they were well acquainted with the object which brought them there;—were they willing to enter into a conflict with a body of men larger in number, better armed, more used to such scenes of blood and carnage? If they were willing let them say so. A low but distinct "We are!" passed around. Nat continued:—

"The soldiers were to start from Charleston at an early hour this afternoon, before this time they should have accomplished the distance. There is another road which they must have taken. Timothy Turner,"—at the mention of this name a shout of execration burst from the lips of all—"I say, Turner knows the other road, and that it leads near by the spot where we would have held our meeting. I think I know the exact spot where the dragoons are this moment stationed. By going three quarters of a mile out of our way, we may, by a third path, come upon them unawares. Shall we venture?"

No one raised a dissentient voice; all seemed anxious for the fray. One, however, a hardy-looking six-footer, begged leave to say a word before they started.

"You see we're formin' into a troop that's goin' to give thunder and brimstone to every bloody, steadin', cutthroat of a Britisher that we come across. You know who started this here idea, and got it into motion, an' all that 'ar; but there's one thing that ain't settled yet, an' that is, *who's* captain? It's put generally understood that Nat Ernsbaw is goin' to lead us, but we hain't actually given him the legal authority yet; so I move that he be constitooted our captain, an' we all agree to be under and obey his orders, rounda sower fashion. Whoever's in favor of this let him speak out and tell it."

A simultaneous and unanimous "ay!" announced that Nat Ernsbaw was the accepted and willing chosen commander of the patriotic brigade.

"Three cheers for Erushaw's brigade!" shouted one whose patriotism had overcome his prudence, and the three cheers were accordingly given with a will. Then the whole band took up its line of march, the men handling their weapons with eager impatience.

Nat was busy in laying out his plans for attack. The principal difficulty which presented itself seemed to be, how to open the fire. He might, he felt assured, steal upon the dragoons and shoot down a score or more of them before they could rightly tell from whence their danger came; but there was almost an insuperable objection to this plan—it seemed too much like murder. After due deliberation he settled on the course which he intended to take, and which seemed to be most safe as well as most honorable. What it was, the reader will hereafter learn.

When the Americans reached the path which led through the woods, the captain addressed a few last words to his men. Then they pressed on with noiseless steps. When Erushaw found they were within a few rods of the spot designated, he left the troop and went forward to reconnoiter. Carefully peering through an opening between the pines, he looked out. It was a clear, moonlight night—so light that he could easily distinguish the forms of some forty or fifty horsemen, who occupied the area before him. Wishing to draw closer to them to mark their disposal, a crackling stick betrayed his presence. Every one of the waiting enemies were startled—the captain of the troop calling out, "Here comes one of them at last. Into the woods after him, half a dozen of you, but don't use fire arms unless it is absolutely necessary. It will give the alarm."

Instantly seven of the privates threw themselves from their steeds for the pursuit; but they had scarcely touched the ground when a command, given in a quick, clear-tinging voice, riveted them to their places. "Hold! Not one step or you are dead men. Surrender to Nat Erushaw's Carolina Brigade, or your lives shall be the forfeit!"

For a time a panic seemed to thrill the hearts of the Britons—this command so unexpectedly, so sternly given.

"It's but a ruse my men," shouted the captain. "First rank fire a volley, then charge into the woods."

"Fire away. We will return volley for volley, and the man who stirs from his tracks dies," responded Nat. Then turning to his men, who had ranged themselves in solid rank behind him, he gave the command:—"Make ready, advance, take aim, and be ready."

A murmur ran along the ranks. The clicking of thirty rifles sounded out on the still air. The British troops had quickly formed, and, at the word of command, they sent a volley from the carbines with which the dragoons were armed, into the patriot ranks.

"Fire!" shouted Nat. The combined crack of the thirty rifles rang out with a fearfully startling sound. The hail of lead was deadly in the extreme, though its effect was not as severe as it might have been had it gone hurtling forth in the daytime. Many a bullet proved a messenger of death to the mercenaries of the foreigner.

Sixteen of the troopers dropped from their saddles, dead. The captain received a ball through his shoulder. Eight others were severely wounded. With that marvelous celerity gained by practice, the Americans had reloaded their rifles. "First division, fire!" commanded Emshaw. Another volley sped on its mission of blood, and half the remaining troopers tumbled from their saddles, while their maddened and frightened horses flew wildly away into the woods.

"Fly," screamed a Briton. "We can not remain longer here and live!"

"Hold!" cried the leader of the Americans. "Throw down your arms and surrender and your lives are safe; attempt to flee and we give you another volley."

Hardly had the summons to surrender been given, when the few of the soldiers who still grasped their arms threw them down, and the captain, faint from the loss of blood, answered:—"We agree. Come forward and receive our surrender."

The Americans stepped from the shade of the woods and stood in a line, waiting for the commands of their captain. As Emshaw appeared, the crack of a pistol was heard, and a bullet whistled by close to his head.

"Missed! by the infernal!" shouted a voice, easily recognized as that of the very Turner. He plunged into the gloom of the woods, unappalled by the fact a bullet that followed

"The tory, Turner!" remarked one of the men; "let us pursue him. His capture is of more importance than all else we have done."

"Not so," replied Ernshaw; "let no man go in pursuit. It would be impossible to come up with him, and our force would only be separated, which must not be."

A little murmuring followed, but all soon saw the wisdom of obeying the captain, and, accordingly, quietly acquiesced.

General Clinton was sitting in his chamber, busily engaged in examining a number of parchments which lay exposed on the table before him. It was now well on toward noon. Though apparently intent on his work, his mind evidently was not at ease. "It is strange," he muttered to himself, "that nothing has been heard concerning Captain Morgan and his troop, whom I sent out to capture those rebels. I told him to endeavor to take the young man, Vale, alive, if possible, and send me word immediately. One of his men would have arrived, ere this, had he chosen to obey my commands. I will see, though; perhaps there is some news stirring without."

He advanced to the door for the purpose of calling his servant, when a loud knocking arrested him. He stood for a moment listening, and then sunk back in his chair, remarking, "There is some one at last."

The door was flung open to admit the tory spy, Timothy Turner. With a pale face splattered with blood, and his left arm supported in a sling, he strode across the floor, and stood confronting the general. For a moment Sir Henry looked at him with a countenance indicative of surprise and apprehension; then he burst forth:

"How now, sir? What brings you before me in such plight? Speak, man!"

"It is easy to tell the whole story. We went out to shear, and come home shorn—or, rather, I do, for I am the only one who escaped. All the rest are dead, or prisoners!"

"Then you deceived me, and I shall see that you receive your reward for so doing. Without there, Sampson!"

"You needn't put such a sorry face on the matter, general, for the information I gave you was correct enough. The

trouble was, that the rebels got wind of our intended attack, hid themselves in the woods, and, when the moon arose, came down on us as they would on a covey of partridges. If I had wished to deceive you, I should have taken better care of myself, and this left arm would not have had a rille-ball through it. I remained till every thing was lost, fired the last shot, and then cleared out, with half a score of balls flying around my head. If that looks like treachery, then call in your men and do as you like with me."

"Probably it is as you say, and I was overhasty. The king can not afford to lose such friends as you. There is gold to heal your wounds. Leave me, now, for I have important business to attend to."

Turner pocketed the purse which Sir Henry threw upon the table, and, making a low bow, left the apartment.

Ten minutes later, Sampson, the black servant, entered, bearing a card, with the name, "Captain Reginald Preston," written thereon. Receiving the command to admit him, the gentleman soon made his appearance. He was still a young man, not over thirty, and, by some, would doubtless be called good looking; but a close inspection would tend to dissipate any favorable opinion which might be hastily formed. Though well dressed, with all the appearance of being a gentleman, his features were the stamp of a life of profligacy, the effects of which, the strength of a good constitution was unable to ward off. Of good family, though a younger son, he had once been possessed of quite a fortune, which he squandered away amidst the splendid gayeties of London life, and was now recruiting his health and fortune in the service of the king. Such in appearance was Reginald Preston, the visitor of Sir Henry Clinton.

He approached the general in a careless manner. Shaking hands with the superior officer, he took a seat.

"I received your note," remarked Preston, after a silence of some minutes, which he spent in curiously eyeing the papers on the table. "I could not quite understand the drift of it, but here I am to receive the explanation, which you promise when we should meet. I send out my application for exchange by the next ship, and have a fair prospect of leaving this miserable country; so don't send me where I will be

killed all before I got a chance to enjoy this fortune of mine."

"Perhaps it may be as well to stay here. You never could live in London without money, and your pockets are not particularly replete with *that* article."

"I know they haven't been; but this little fortune I was speaking about is sufficient to keep me floating until I can carry off a rich wife. Three thousand a year is not such an insignificant sum."

"It is concerning that 'small fortune' that I wish to speak. If you will take the trouble to recall the words of your letter from Thompson & Smith, you will remember that they stated the fact in nearly these words: 'Although, at the present time we can scarce speak with absolute certainty, yet, we have the pleasure of announcing, in all probability you are heir to an estate of three thousand a year. We would not advise you to announce this as a *fact*, until we discover whether there be any nearer relatives to the deceased than yourself. At present, we know of none.' Are not these the words?"

"I must confess that you are better posted in the matter of the letter than I am. If you ask my opinion, I should say they are the precise words."

"Well, then, listen. By these papers which you see upon the table, it is announced that a nearer relative to the gentleman who left the property *has* been discovered, and that your chances of again shining in London life are decidedly slim -- for the present, at least."

The careless expression which had been resting on Preston's face, suddenly vanished under this, to him, remarkably unpleasant intelligence.

"Good heavens, general! You do not mean to say that all my plans are to be disarranged, and hopes blasted in this shockingly disagreeable manner. Those Thompsons and Smiths must be a set of thorough-faced rascals. As to my uncle's having any relatives *safer* of our family, and nearer than myself, I am sure it's a mistake, or else a trumped-up claim. His wife died forty years ago, and his only son was killed among the Indians, nearly as long since."

"You have hit the right nail on the head, to use a vulgar expression. That son is the person to whom I refer. If

seems that he was *not* killed by the Indians, and lived long enough to raise a family. He is dead *now*, but there remains a son and daughter, not to speak of his wife. Your uncle took it into his head to turn this only son out of doors; that was what caused him to come to America; but, as he left no will, the estate naturally enough reverts to his grand children."

"And who are these grandchildren?"

"The grandson is John Vale, one of the rebels whom we endeavored to capture yesterday night."

CHAPTER IV.

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB.

"So, he is nothing but one of these cursed rebels, after all. If *that* is the case, my chances are not so desperate as you seem to think. If Captain Morgan succeeded in doing his duty, he is doubtless in custody now, if not dead. Of course I speak of the young man; I have no fears of the old woman and her daughter."

"Captain Morgan did his duty to the best of his ability; but I am sorry to say that John Vale is not only *not* in custody, but that, on the contrary, it is Morgan and his command—that is, those of them that are still alive—who are the prisoners."

"You can not mean to say that a troop of dragoons has been defeated by a squad of these half-mounted, half-armed rebels?"

"I mean to say just that; and I now order you to take your troop and proceed to the spot to bury our dead. No doubt the Americans will be in such haste to leave, after their victory, that they will have left the corpses still exposed."

"And after that, what remains to be done?"

"You will leave the spot and return some miles. There are two whigs, whose houses are close together; their names are Phillips and Tappan. Take up your quarters with them

until I send you further orders. It will be necessary to have a force in that vicinity, and your work will soon be ready for you."

"Then I must hold myself ready to begin the extermination of the rebels. I go; but I have misgivings that it will be no child's mission."

"Good-morning, then."

"*Adieu, monsieur!*" and, with a graceful wave of his hand, Reginald Preston departed.

Hastening to his quarters, he found that the news of the defeat of Captain Morgan had preceded him. On leaving the presence of Sir Henry, Turner had been active in spreading the story of the defeat. He found the men now anxious for a brush with the "rebel dogs," as they styled the patriot brigade.

When the duty detailed was confided to the soldiers, they were enthusiastic enough, and set up a shout. In an hour from the time Preston bade adieu to General Clinton, he was on the road, having Turner with him as guide.

The arm of the tory was not, by any means, seriously injured; and the prospect of more gold made him ready to encounter danger again, although he had but lately so narrowly escaped death. They had not ridden far, when Preston expressed a wish to have some conversation with him, and the two rode on some distance ahead.

Whatever it was that Reginald wanted, it seemed as though he found some difficulty in getting at it. After some questions of no moment, he began to speak of the Vales. If he was desirous of knowing the history of the family, from the very moment when the head of it first put foot within the State, he could have found no more fitting person to inquire of. Turner had made them a study, it would seem; and the questioner soon learned a great deal more than it was pleasing for him to know. There was no doubt, now, in his mind, but that John Vale was his uncle's grandson, and fully entitled to the possession of the property which he had fondly hoped was to become his own. Although the young man was a rebel to the crown, he was afraid that it would not invalidate his title to the estate. Although John Vale and the rest of the family might be attainted, yet he well knew that a large propor-

tion of the money was in the hands of Americans, and probably they were whigs.

What thoughts passed through his brain in the course of that ride, it is hard to state; but, long ere the journey's end was reached, his mind was settled as to the course to be pursued. The fortune he *could* have, and Turner should be the tool through which he should reach it. Riding side by side

the now deliberate villain and his tool occasionally spoke together, but Preston was too much engaged in perfecting his plans to ask more than an occasional question; while Turner, cunning, and quick of divination, had a partial clue to what was in the mind of the British partisan.

When the British reached the spot on which the conflict of the preceding night had taken place, they found all traces of the struggle removed. Four or five newly-made mounds testified that the rebels were too brave and generous to let the corpses of their foes remain festering in the sun. Here and there, among the short grass, deep red stains and pools of coagulated blood marked the spot where the men had fallen; a broken plume, a glove, or a torn epaulet—these were the only signs of the slaughter. Horses, men, arms—all had disappeared, and the Britons had the consolation of knowing that when they should meet this brigade of rebels, they would find them armed with tried weapons of Great Britain's own furnishing. The men looked mournfully around; for soldiers have hearts, and are capable of warm attachments; and here many a comrade, with whom they had spent many happy hours, had bit the dust.

Preston marked the direction which Ershaw had taken, for his trail was plainly visible; but, as his orders were to retire toward Charleston as soon as he had performed the last sad offices for the fallen, he dared not go in pursuit, although his men were eager enough for a fray. Disappointment was plainly visible on more than one face, when the order came for a return, but no murmurs were raised. Slowly the procession emerged from the woods, and crossed Cedar Creek, taking the road which led toward the farm-houses, where Captain Preston was to take up his headquarters.

Mrs. Vale had, long ere this, heard the result of the conflict, for her son had returned at early dawn. It was to stay

but for a moment, however, for he knew that now home would be no place for him. A company would be sent to revenge the defeat of Captain Morgan as soon as intelligence would be received by the commander at Charleston; and, as his house lay on the road, it would be dangerous to be near it.

When the troop had arrived opposite the door, Reginald gave the command to halt, and ordered half-a-dozen of his men to dismount, and search the house. Though it was improbable, it still was not impossible that some of the rebels might be found within it. Catherine and her mother were sitting sewing, when the door was rudely flung open, disclosing the red-coated soldiers who stood at the threshold.

With calmness Mrs. Vale arose, and advanced a step toward them, saying, as she did, "What do you want, sirs?"

The men replied by entering the room first; then, one of them said: "To search the house to see if there be any rebels laid away within it."

"One of you will be sufficient, then; you will find nothing within its walls which it is not right that an honest woman should have."

"And your son—is he within?"

"He is *not*; but if he were, it perhaps were as well for you to defer the search, for he is not one who willingly permits liberties to be taken with himself or his house."

The answer that was given to this rather fiery speech of the good woman, was a fierce scowl, and then the men spread themselves over the house. It was soon evident that those whom they sought were not within, and they passed out. Reaching the yard, a large-sized dog was standing in the pathway, regarding them with a look which might well pass for one of intense astonishment. The foremost soldier, not liking the looks of the animal, and having a deep hatred for any thing American, drew his sabre and made a stroke at the interfering dog as he moved him. The sudden attack, and the pain of a slight wound, caused the dog to bound aside with a sharp cry; but, almost immediately he turned, wild, with lips drawn back over his teeth, was about to spring upon the offender.

Catherine, who had hitherto remained seated, hearing the cry rushed to the door. In a moment she detected the true

condition of affairs. At the sound of her call Lion forgot his purpose, and, with a quick bound, leaping by his would-be slayer, stood by the side of Miss Vale.

Captain Preston saw what had transpired, and called to the man to relinquish his purpose—for he had turned as if to follow the creature. With a ready obedience the fellow obeyed. With a low bow to the fair young girl, who still stood in the doorway, the captain struck spurs into his charger's sides, and galloped away, his men following at the same rate of speed. Catherine and her mother gazed after them, and, as the maiden caressed the shaggy head of Lion, she gave vent to her feelings, by saying to her mother in a low, half-musing tone: "Notwithstanding all the cruel deeds that have been committed by these foreign soldiers, there seems to be a little good in some of them. So they would kill you, my brave Lion, for trying to defend your home? You must be more careful next time, or you may get yourself into an unpleasant difficulty, from which you can not come with a whole skin."

The dog shook his head gravely, and looked up into the face of his mistress, as though he understood the advice given him, but was rather uncertain, whether or no he should take it. He gave a low bark and wagging his tail threw himself on the floor, while Catherine resumed her sewing.

Great was the consternation of the good old whigs, Phillips and Tappan, when a troop of British cavalry came dashing along the road, and drew up in front of the dwelling of the former. In answer to a heavy knock, the old man himself came to the door. Reginald Preston related to him the orders of General Clinton. Where he could find accommodations for thirty or thirty-five men, was a question that puzzled the good old man for a time, but he comforted himself with the thought that he would be no worse off than his neighbor Mr. Tappan—toward whose house the remainder of the troops were being led by their captain.

As there was no possible good to be gained by demurring, Mr. Tappan, like Mr. Phillips, obeyed the order of his uninvited guests with seeming alacrity, and did his best to ingratiate himself with those who had the power to resent any fancied ill-treatment.

Captain Reginald had a room set apart for his use in Mr. Tappan's house, but, as the two whigs were near neighbors, he was not separated from the rest of his command, by more than two hundred yards.

As he retired for the night, he murmured to himself: "I must really find some way of becoming more intimate with that pretty cousin of mine, for, though not beautiful, she pleases my fancy most mightily. I have half an idea that it would *pay* to *marry* her, and settle down in this cursed country! With her share of the fortune, I could become quite a respectable farmer. How it would look! The honorable Reginald Preston driving a couple of plough horses."

CHAPTER V.

CEDAR SWAMP.

NAT ERNSHAW had not a very definite idea of what was to be done when he organized his brigade. His intention was patriotic,—to assist his country in retaining her independence,—but, how it was to be done was not particularly clear at the outset. To wage war against the bands of armed tories, which were constantly being formed; to take as prisoners any straggling British, and to attack and cut to pieces all troops, hostile to the great cause, whom he should chance to meet; these were the objects contemplated when working to form the brigade. His signal success in the outset had been inspiring to his men as well as to himself, and they were now willing to obey his orders, with a confidence which an untried leader never inspires.

One of the great objects sought for was accomplished in the defeat of the dragoons; his men were able to mount and arm themselves well. Feeling not the least compunction in spoiling those who had come to spoil them, the armaments and equipments of the conquered foe were quickly appropriated by the conquerors; and, having buried the fallen, the whole party held a consultation. It was decided to be unsafe to disband,

and that it would be better to fall back to Cedar Swamp. From thence, the troop could send out scouts, who might learn whatever was going on, and bring intelligence of any place where their services would be of use.

Although the prisoners were a burden, still, there was a disinclination to let them go. Accordingly, it was decided that they also should be carried to the swamp, as they might be at some future time, serviceable for exchange. By morning the troop was plunging into the hidden recesses of Cedar Swamp.

One might search in vain for a better place of rendezvous, surrounded on the outside by a swamp which it was almost impossible for a footman to pass, much less a horseman. There was, within, a cordon of thickly interwoven bushes and stunted trees; then another ring of swamp, and, finally, in the center, a spot of solid ground, some fifteen acres in extent, studded here and there with tall trees. One track there was, winding and intricate, along which the Americans found their way under the careful guidanceship of John Vale. It differed not in its appearance from the adjoining swamp; but, under the wet, miry earth, at the depth of six or eight inches, there was solid footing.

As it was uncertain how long they would remain in this place, and as the swamp would always be their place of refuge, on which to fall back, it had been determined to construct a few huts, sufficient for the accommodation of the whole brigade and their prisoners. Brawny arms were lent to the task; and, long before nightfall eight small cabins were to be seen, lifting their humble roofs which were rendered quite impervious to inclement weather. Several of the men had been dispatched to their homes to procure provisions, and make arrangements with their families, by which supplies could be obtained during their stay in the Swamp.

Five days have passed. During that time Captain Preston has been quartered at the house of Mr. Tappan. It was a heavy thing for the old patriot to bear this, being compelled to furnish food and drink to the enemies of his country, but, no murmur was allowed to escape his lips; he knew too well what might be the consequences of an unguarded ex-

pression, to allow himself or family to give vent to the feelings which were struggling for utterance.

Understanding his restless disposition, one would suppose that Preston's hours would hang heavily on his mind, yet, that was far from being the case. The tory, Turner, all concealment as to his principles, having been thrown aside, was frequently with the captain holding secret conferences. To what these conferences referred, the reader will learn by a further perusal of our story. The last two days, also, the captain had been absent during the afternoon—had his steps been marked, it would have been found that he rode in the direction of Mrs. Vale's. Reginald seemed to have taken a sudden fancy for his cousin.

This relationship had not thus far been referred to. On the part of Mrs. Vale and her daughter it was never suspected—how could it be, when the name of Preston was totally unfamiliar to her ears? The visits of the captain had been a source of uneasiness to the two. For, although he seemed to have stopped by accident, yet a mother's heart is not the thing to be deceived by a smooth speech, and a well-coined lie. She trembled as she thought of the dangers which the presence of the unwelcome visitor foreboded.

With an unusually warm smile upon his face, Reginald rode up to the house this afternoon. He stated, that, being in want of something to occupy his time, he thought he would ride over and inquire how Miss Catherine's pet was progressing.

The cut which Lion, the dog, had received was severe, and the noble animal was consequently an object on which he might exercise his commiseration.

Captain Preston was received with a cool welcome. Mrs. Vale was polite—freezingly so; and Catherine, while she did not manifest decided displeasure, did not seem to be overjoyed at his presence. The gallant captain had not created a very good impression in his three visits.

With a pertinacity, by no means pleasant to the uninvited guest, the widow kept her seat, nor once offered to leave the room, while Kate seemed deaf to the hints which were thrown out concerning the state of the garden, the agreeableness of the weather, and the propriety of exercise. The nimble fingers plied the needle most rapidly, while answering the na-

merous questions of Reginald. As he did not think it best to commence an offensive warfare upon women, the chances of any private conference with his fair cousin, seemed, to Preston, to be small indeed; so small, that the thought of incontinently beating a retreat, more than once crossed the Briton's mind, but was as often dismissed; he could not—he *would* not give up so!

At length, insensibly as it were, Mrs. Vale was drawn into conversation. The young man had an insinuating manner that was hard to resist, and he taxed his conversational powers to entertain these, to him, simple folk, quite as much as he had ever done to rivet the attention of some wealthy belle, in the days when he flirted in the London *salons*, and was an honored guest at the table of the richest and most *distinguished* families of the aristocracy. So much did the widow forget herself, that she actually asked the visitor to remain for tea, when she saw him preparing to leave about half an hour before the regular time for that meal. Gratifying as it would, no doubt, have been to the young man, he was, nevertheless, compelled to decline—he had an engagement which it was necessary for him to meet; he did not, however, state this as an excuse, but simply declared his inability to remain.

When Preston had departed, the impression he left behind was rather favorable than otherwise. Kate's heart told her he was one to be feared rather than respected, and that these visits boded no good. On the contrary, the mother's first suspicions seemed allayed, and she expressed a fear that she had hastily formed a bad opinion of the honest young man, as Captain Preston appeared to be. He promised her dwelling protection from all foraging parties belonging to their ill.

As a general rule, it is wisest not hastily to change first-formed opinions. Mrs. Vale saw into the true character of Reginald almost the moment he crossed her threshold, but suffered her vision to be obscured by the curtain of plausible conversation and insinuating manners, of the shrewd man of the world. She was not the first mother who had been flattered into silence in the same manner!

CHAPTER VI.

HOT WORK AHEAD.

Two weeks have elapsed since the time when Nat Ernsshaw first formally enrolled the names of the volunteers, who wished to fight under the continental banner. During that two weeks they have not been altogether idle, for, in addition to the discomfiture of the troop of dragoons, they had attacked and dispersed some fifteen or twenty Tories who had assembled at a spot about nine miles from the swamp.

It may, at first, seem strange that the Americans did not make an attack upon the detachment of soldiers which had, for over a fortnight, been holding, as a barrack, the houses of Tappan and Phillips. No doubt they would have been willing enough to attempt an expedition, had there been a probability of success. Nat considered that his force of thirty-five or forty men would hardly be able to cope with fifty or sixty, unless the larger party could be taken by surprise. Though a scout had been for days watching the houses, it so far seemed as though nothing could be done.

It was late in the evening, and the sun's last lingering rays had long since ceased to tinge the western horizon, when the majority of the patriot soldiers were already "turned in," that Capt. Ernsshaw was startled by hearing the low, long-drawn whistle of the sentinel stationed at the outskirts of the swamp.

The signal implied that something important was to be communicated. Thrusting a pistol in his belt, Ernsshaw left the hut and traversed the—by no means safe—path that led to the willow-trees under which the sentinel was stationed.

As he neared the spot, it could be seen that the guard had left his place of concealment, and was engaged in talking with a young lad. The boy, who was mounted on a speedy-looking rean mare, had evidently ridden far and fast.

"Why, Simon, is that you?" queried Ernsshaw, as he took

the boy by the hand. "What has brought you away out here in such a hurry? Something important, I'll be bound."

Simon nodded a recognition as he handed a letter to the captain, saying: "I should think it must be important, for father told me to ride as though my life was on it. Sampson was down at our house this morning, and, after he had left, Simon wrote this letter. I guess you'll have pretty hard work to read it, for he was in a hurry."

"Follow me into the camp," said Erashaw; "but be sure you don't turn aside on the way. The bog is deep enough to swallow up a hundred as good horses as that gallant rean of yours, and I should be sorry to see her floundering there after doing us such good service."

"Never mind, Mister Nat. I guess I know the path nearly as well as you do. Before father moved to Charleston we lived about three quarters of a mile from here, and there's many a time that I went to gather berries in Cedar Swamp."

"Come on, then, for I am impatient to read this letter."

The letter, though hastily scrawled by one whose hands were stiffened with many a day's hard labor, was sufficiently legible to be read by Nat. He found that it contained important news indeed. It ran as follows:

FRIEND NAT:--Keep your eyes open, for Clinton is going to give you a brush. Turner was over here yesterday, and the general has determined to send out a force of a hundred men for your capture. There's to be a tory meeting on Black Run to-morrow evening, and there'll be thirty-five of the traitors present. I guess you know what to do. They will be well armed, so you may expect some hard knocks. Ben Graham is at the bottom of it, and the meeting will be in his barn. You know the spot. Success to the good cause!

SIMON.

For some minutes Nat did not speak. The distance from Cedar Swamp to the Black Run station of in the letter was but little, if any, over seven miles, and every man in the brigade was well acquainted with the road. There was no necessity for immediate action, as the distance could be got over, on the following day, from sunset till ten o'clock.

"Well, Simon, you are our good genius," said Nat. "The

intelligence you bring is important enough, and you can tell your father he may rest assured that I will act upon it. Gen. Clinton will find that the best hundred men in the British army would be insufficient to effect our capture; and, as for the tales of Black Blin, all I have to say is, that if there are not a few unwelcome guests intruding upon their resting place before it comes to a close, it will be because there are no true patriots left in the Carolinas. Will you remain with us to-night?"

"I guess I had better. You see the roan can stand as hard a pull as most horses, but it will not do to work her too hard. She has got over near thirty miles to-day, and thirty more would be a little too much."

"You are right, Simon; turn in with us. Accommodations are rather poor, but I think you can stand it."

"If I stay to-night, I am afraid you will have to keep me to-morrow, too. The Britishers are on the road, and stopped me as I was coming down, but I trumped up a pretty long story for them. If they see me again, they may stick a little closer."

"Never mind that. You are welcome to stay as long as you choose, provided you are willing to brave our hardships and dangers. You shall always be welcome. For to-night you must share my bed, such as it is."

Wearied with his long ride, the young patriot needed no second urging. He was soon fast asleep. Early in the following morning the whole brigade was, as usual, up and astir. Simon's mysterious appearance created some surprise, for the arrival of the previous night had not been spoken of by the sentinel; but when it was hinted that he brought important intelligence, which would doubtless bring them face to face with the enemy again, considerable enthusiasm was manifested, and two or three of the more immediate acquaintances of the blacks' son, assumed the pleasant task of "pumping" him. Their success in this undertaking was by no means equal to their perseverance.

After an hour of ungratified curiosity had passed, the men were drawn up by command of Ernsbaw, who stated that he had something to communicate, which, doubtless, they would gladly hear.

"From a devoted friend of liberty," said Nat, "residing in Charleston, I have just received a message. There is to be a meeting of tories held to-night at Ben Graham's, on Black Run. From what I hear, I think it is their intention to assist the British troops in attempting our capture. Of course you know what I would wish to do; are you all with me?"

"All!" was the answer, given in a single breath.

"Then hold yourselves in readiness to march at sunset, in the direction of Graham's. We will strike such a blow as will make these scoundrels, who would make a profit on the blood of their countrymen, at least a deal more cautious how they attempt to carry on their trade within reach of the strong arms of American freemen. Look well to your arms, boys; nerve your hearts for a determined struggle, and to-night we will strike again for liberty."

During the day there was a bustle among the men of the brigade, that told the British prisoners, confined within the recesses of the swamp, that something of more than ordinary importance was about to take place. Swords were brightened and sharpened, cartridges were made, and a look, which spoke of eager impatience, was worn by all. As night flung her shadow on all, Nat Ershaw's brigade rode out into the darkness, and the confines of Cedar Swamp were untenanted save by the dozen English prisoners and the five patriots left to guard them. For a time the noise of footsteps came faintly to their listening ears; then all was silence.

Let us return to Captain Preston and his schemes. With their plot and counterplot, they enter into the thread of our story to color it all.

The *gallant* Briton was hastily pacing the room. His face, flushed as it with anger, wore a well-settled scowl. Half an hour before he had returned from one of his afternoon excursions at such a pace that one might think forty troopers were close behind in hot pursuit.

Casting his bridle to a soldier in waiting, Preston strode away to his room. Once there, he cast his chapeau upon the bed, and began his hasty walk, in which, however, he was interrupted by a knock on the door. In none of the best of humors he said, "Come in!" The summons was obeyed by

a young man whom Reginald knew as an aid-de-camp of Gen. Clinton. In his hand he bore a folded paper.

The young men bowed to each other, and then the stranger said, at the same time handing the paper which he bore, "I was commissioned by Gen. Clinton to bring you these instructions. You are to follow them to the letter, and he hopes that you may be enabled to do good service to your country."

In his present mood Reginald felt in no humor for interruption. Unfolding the paper, he hastily read its contents. He was informed that, in conjunction with a score of light dragoons, who would be sent to aid him, he would soon have the opportunity of crossing swords with the man who, above all others, he now hated—John Vale. Under the guidance of Timothy Turner, Cedar Swamp was to be invaded; for Gen. Clinton had learned that Nat Ershaw's brigade was there ensconced.

"Do you intend to return to Charleston?" inquired Preston, turning to the aid-de-camp.

"Immediately. Such were my orders."

"Then you will inform Gen. Clinton that I hold myself in readiness to obey his orders; and, so soon as the reinforcements of which he speaks—though I see no real necessity for them—shall arrive, I will proceed to attack the rebels. Tell him, from me, that I desire something of the kind—some more stirring life; for this inactive state of affairs is enough to drive a man crazy."

"I will say this to him," answered the young man, and bowed himself out of the room.

When the messenger had departed, Reginald resumed his walk, all the while muttering to himself.

"Too bad! too bad!" burst from his lips. "That rebel beauty has twined herself about my heart until I—I, who could pass through all the gayeties of London life with a heart untouched—am almost her slave! By all that's holy and unholy, she shall not triumph thus! I'll make her come down on her knees and beg—ay, beg in vain—for that which I have so freely offered her. By heavens! it makes my blood boil when I think of it. She, with her soft, baby face wearing a smile of contempt—I, like a school-boy, kneeling at her feet, asking her for her love! She shall learn what it is to

scorn one who has the will and the power to return revenge for scorn, and bring tears for laughter."

Catherine Vale it was who brought that scowl to Reginald's brow, who drove him up and down the room, like one possessed. That afternoon, standing under the shadow of the great pear-tree which stood behind the house, he had offered his love, laid his open his heart, and was rejected with a firmness which had something of scorn in it.

"Useless, sir!" said Catherine. "No arguments which you can offer may avail to change my determination. I had partially foreseen some such result, yet did not know how I could avoid it. If your professions are sincere, I thank you for the honor which you have conferred upon me. At the same time, I suppose you see the impropriety of your continuing your visits. Once for all, I bid you good-by."

She held out her hand. The captain endeavored to detain it, but the ever-present Lion came between them rather menacingly to the lover. He flung the hand from him, hastily remounted his horse, and rode away.

Catherine had a foreboding of evil to come from that rejection. She saw the black cloud, for now she read the heart of the man clearly, truthfully.

Turner now was with the English. To him Reginald naturally turned as a fit instrument to work out his will. At his command, Timothy made his appearance. Soon they were beset with the details of a plan, which even the traitor tory hesitated at first to engage in. But a man who can betray his country for gold will not hesitate long, even where a maiden's honor is pitted against the base courage of the unscrupulous villain.

"Beware, Turner, of ever breathing a syllable, to a living soul, of aught concerning which I have spoken or shall speak. You know my wish. Now, will you act?"

"Whenever you can show me that it is to my *interest* to follow your lead, then I will do what you command," said the tory, with a slow but distinct, determined utterance.

"It shall be to your interest, if by interest you refer to your reward in gold. I am not the kind of man to see friends of mine go unrewarded. Will you promise secrecy and obedience? If so, here is a foretaste of what you may expect."

Preston dangled before the eyes of the base wretch a purse well filled with gold.

"While you give gold I will give service," said Turner. "When you find me shrinking at *any* piece of work where there is money to be made, then just shoot me. I ain't fit to live."

The Briton smiled in real satisfaction, as he noted how eager was the thirst for gold in the heart of the scoundrel before him. With gold he could lead him anywhere, even to the very gates of death. He had found his man!

"Take this purse," continued Preston; "and now listen to what I say. You have, I suppose, a pretty good idea already of what it is; hear these particulars. This Kate Vale must be abducted, but it must be done in such a manner that none of the blame can rest on *me*. Persons may suspect, but they must have *no proof* on which to hang their suspicions."

"Well, what else?"

"Return to the city and search out a private in Hyde's company. The fellow's name is Blanchard. You can easily find him, for he passes all his time, when not on duty, in a small tavern in the lower part of the city, kept by one James Fagan. After finding him, explain the state of affairs, and lay your heads together. If you two can not abduct the woman between you, I would not give much for your services."

"Is Blanchard entirely and devotedly in your confidence?" queried Turner. This asking him to assist in the abduction of an honest woman, whose only crime was her not being able to appreciate the good qualities of a British officer, was a matter which required every caution.

"Fully. He was in my service before he enlisted, and you need not be afraid of his betraying you. Tom Blanchard may be a villain, but he is one who will never stoop to betraying a confidence, or turning on a friend."

"Then that is all I wished to know. I suppose you want the thing done as soon as possible; so, without waiting any longer, I am off for Charleston. As it will cost considerable, I suppose this purse is only for expenses; our reward is to come afterwards."

"Yes, yes; leave now. Do your best, and if you succeed you shall be fully paid for your time and trouble."

When the base creature left the room, a smile of disgust rose to the face of the captain. Though he was willing to use the tool which so readily yielded to his wishes, Reginald most heartily despised him. These thoughts, however, were soon chased away, for he had other things to consider. This abduction of Catherine Vale was not the only scheme in view. He earnestly wished to effect the death of his other cousin, John Vale.

Not, to be sure, by assassination, but rather by the fortune of war; in the field, with sword in hand, or on the scaffold as a rebel—either of these modes would be justifiable slaying. The sister to be abducted, ruined; the brother to be murdered; the mother to die of a broken heart; when these things are consummated, perchance there may be a truly legal claim upon a certain not-to-be-despised fortune, which these three alive would be pretty sure to keep him from. All should be done, and the "fortunes of war" would bear the whole responsibility.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ASSAULT UPON THE BARN AT BLACK RUN.

BEN GRAHAM was by no means a man of small importance, as one might suppose from the manner in which he was spoken of in the letter which Nat Ernshaw had received. On the contrary, he was a man well-off in every respect, being wealthy, and, in spite of his manners,—which, as a general matter, were by no means worthy of imitation,—was possessed of influence among the farmers who lived in vicinity with Black Run.

Though suspected long since by Ernshaw for having a greater love for the British than was to be desired by an American born citizen, yet he had never any reasonable amount of proof to justify him in denouncing Graham as a tory. Now, although Hunt might be mistaken,—which was very improbable,—the predilections of the wealthy planter were about to be determined with a certainty.

When the shadow of night had fairly clouded over all, the first of the tories made his appearance in front of Graham's house. Each one to be admitted into the tory council was intrusted with a secret sign and password. With these this first-comer was acquainted; so Ben, who was enjoying the night, and apparently taking his ease, sitting on his porch, invited the man to take a seat.

Soon two others made their appearance, each giving the mysterious password. All three were directed to go to the old barn, where Ben would meet them so soon as their number was complete.

In the course of half an hour thirty men were congregated in the old barn, when Ben appeared, bearing a lantern, and bringing with him three more men. It did not take the meeting long to organize, for every one was in a hurry to learn what precise advantage it would be to them to be members of the tory regimen.

When at last, Ben Graham stated the case, the whole secret was told in one word—*plunder*. Plunder from the whigs whatsoever there was to plunder, whether money, lands, or life. Chosen from a circuit of a number of miles, as men, devoid of principle, but full of the lust for money, these fellows were just the creatures to be moved by the mind and judgment of Ben Graham—for that gentleman, of course, intended for himself the honors of a captaincy.

Four dimly burning stable-lanterns cast but a weak and fitful light over the large company assembled in that old barn. The room, though in reality well paved and dry, seemed damp and gloomy. All outside openings had been carefully boarded up, so that no unobserved listener might see the gathering or catch some unguarded speech.

It was, in truth, a picturesque scene,—these thirty men, all crime-stamped, as the majority of them were, standing around a huge box—through the dim light looking like an altar, and the men like devotees to some strange shrine—and bending their gaze fixedly upon the stern countenance of the self-elected leader. Bold, unscrupulous, fond of adventure, without a thought for the right of the question, Graham was the sort of man to lead such a horde of villains.

A half-hour slipped away. The opinions of the men had been taken, and Graham elected, with all due formality, captain. Anxious to assume his new dignity in a manner suitable at once to it and to himself, Captain Ben proceeded to make a speech:—

“I know most of you have your rifles, but there are some who are without weapons, and, what is worse, not meaning any offence, without money to buy any. The king is particularly careful that such men shall be enabled to do their duty; and so this box, here, contains about a dozen rifles,—for I thought we’d need that many,—and swords and daggers enough to go around the whole party. If one of you will hand me an ax, I will open the box and show you the gift of the king.”

An ax made its appearance. A few vigorous strokes removed the top of the box, disclosing the arms of which Graham had spoken. With exclamations of pleasure the men crowded around the box handling the weapons, and praising

their leader for thus procuring the "tools" for those who were without them.

Nat Ernsbaw's men had been at no pains to heat their gallant steeds. The meeting had been some time in session ere the brigade arrived in sight of the old barn. There was no sign of any person being within that dark, deserted-looking stone pile.

"By heavens!" whispered one, "I believe that for once we are out,—that we have been fooled, and that the sooner we get back to the swamp the better."

"Pooh!" answered the one addressed; "you had better reserve your opinions for to-morrow morning, then, if you are alive, you are welcome to pass what judgment you choose upon the object of this expedition. I'll wager you three to one it's not a wild-goose chase."

"Perhaps!"

"No perhaps about it. Mark my words, we will have some sharp work to-night. Any thing that comes from Simon the blacksmith is reliable information."

"Hush," said one who rode beside the last speaker. "The captain wants us to draw up close and listen to his commands. He has laid out his plan I guess, and is going to explain to us."

Wild Nat had laid out his plans and did explain them.

As Ben Graham was forcing off the lid from the box of arms, Nat was approaching the house with a force of forty dismounted troopers.

A sentinel had been placed on the outside of the barn, with directions to stand in the shadow. Leaving his men, Nat quietly stole around the corner of the barn, looking for the sentinel. When at length his eye rested upon the indistinctly defined shadow of the tory, he threw himself at full length upon the ground and stealthily crawled toward the spot upon which the man was stationed.

John Vale peered cautiously around the corner and watched the progress of his friend. He saw the sentinel suddenly start and lean forward, then a figure leapt up and struck down the man. A low whistle announced to Vale that the coast was clear.

Ben Graham cast a glance of pride upon the stalwart vil-

lids whom he was to command. They gave a shout when they saw the steel, and pressed forward to look within the box.

An answering shout! Was it the echo that pealed through the room, or did they hear that cheer only in imagination? The tories looked at one another with astonishment and fear pictured upon each countenance.

"We are betrayed!" sang out one nearest the door. "Fly, for the rebels are coming!"

A sort of hurried movement was made; then all stood still again, to wait for what was to come. The suspense did not endure long, for with a crash the door flew open, and on the threshold, with a torch in one hand, a bright gleaming sword in the other, stood Nat Ernsshaw, while a swarm of faces showed dark behind him.

"Surrender, you tory dogs!" shouted Nat. "Surrender. Show them your strength, boys. At them!"

The patriots rushed into the room, and were met by those who now were fighting for life. The contest was therefore one of desperation. Notwithstanding the patriots were in the majority, victory was by no means an easy thing to obtain.

The American's torches had been dropped, and the conflict was waged by the light of the four lanterns which hung from the roof of the vault. Graham watched the conduct of his men with a critical eye, even while he was crossing blades with a furious "rebel." The man was ignorant of the science, while Ben was a master of it; consequently, the tory gave his antagonist a severe wound in the arm. The smoke of a score of pistols wrapped the greater part of the scene in obscurity, but the groans of the wounded told that the contest had not been bloodless. One of the lamps had been extinguished by a chance shot; two others hung close together and gave just enough light for Ben to perceive that his men were being slowly but surely driven back.

With all his power the tory captain heaved a heavy horse-pistol which he held in his hand. The weapon struck the lanterns, and effectually extinguished their light. "Retreat, boys!" he shouted. "Retreat!" and he dashed away, followed by his men.

A huge oaken door was at the end of the room. Beyond this a passage led to a stable house some eight or ten yards

from the barn. Along this passage, with swift steps, part of the Tories flew; while some dozen or so, unable to shake off their assailants, still sought to make good their resistance.

The door of the spring-house was burst open, and Graham rushed out, followed by fifteen or sixteen of his fellows; without pausing to see if they were pursued, they made the best of their way to the woods, but fifty rods away.

Nat Emshaw had dispersed the Tories. At a loss of but three men killed, and several severely wounded, he had disposed of thirty desperate plotters against society and the liberties of his country.

CHAPTER VIII.

TIMOTHY TURNER AFTER HIS GAME.

TURNER, anxious to get matters in train for securing the reward promised him by Captain Preston, did not suffer grass to grow under the feet of his horse while he journeyed to Charleston.

Although he was not one of those who are desirous of having a partner in their wicked deeds, yet this abduction was a business which he could not well accomplish without help. For this reason he was well satisfied to follow Preston's advice, and search out Tom Blanchard.

Jen. Fagan's tavern, was a building well known to Timothy, who had, more than once, passed through its portals. Though frequented by a "pretty hard crowd," the peace was but seldom broken in the building. Fagan, a tall, broad-shouldered Irishman, having made up his mind that he alone was privileged to do all the fighting which took place upon his premises. More than once had Turner passed the portals of Fagan's dwelling, and he had, also, often noted the very Tom Blanchard whom Preston had recommended as an assistant. They were "drinking acquaintances," for, though the traitor was not a man to indulge in drinking to excess, he nevertheless was fond of an occasional glass; "it sharpened his wits and braced his nerves amazingly," he averred.

In the course of the evening, the day on which he reached Charleston, the tory sauntered into the bar-room, and, with a careless nod, asked Fagan where Tom Blanchard might be found.

Fagan answered that he could be found in the back room—he had just gone in, and was probably engaged with Joe Lawson in a game of cards.

He found the soldier sitting at a small table with a young man of good appearance. A few silver pieces, lying on the table, told that they were betting.

Tom started, when Turner laid his hand on his shoulder, for he, the drummer, had not seen him enter, the look of alarm was exchanged for one of inquiry, when Turner made a peculiar sign with the fore-finger of his left hand.

"From the captain?" inquired Blanchard.

"Yes!" said Timothy—at the same time placing his finger on his lip to indicate silence.

"Is it right lawwy?" continued Tom, casting a glance full of regret upon the cards and silver.

"Immediately."

"Then, Joe, I'll 'ave to leave you till some better time. I'll 'ate to do hit, but duty says hi must."

"Can't your friend, there, wait a while? Or, perhaps, he would have no objection to take a hand himself?"

Joe Lawson was a professional gambler, although still young, and having an air of respectability about him. Turner, who was an adept at cards, and really longed to finger the treasy trumps, abruptly wheeled about, saying:

"It's impossible, I cannot spare the time."

Turner asked for a private room, and, with the drummer accompanying him, was shown up stairs. Blanchard turned the key upon the inside of the door, but his companion very quietly unlocked it, saying: "In case you want to make a sudden sally, a locked door is very unhandy."

"'Ave it yer hown way. Now what's the go? Yer from the captain, hand must 'ave somethin' to tell."

"I am from Preston; and, as we two are to work together, you will have a chance to find out 'what the go is,' and fill your pocket with the shiners."

"If there's many thing to be made, hi'm hin. The Cap's good pay. Tell h'is what's to be done."

When Tom heard what was expected of them, he merely gave a long whistle, remarking with a savage chuckle, that Preston would have to pay well. Every thing, with this soldier, resolved itself into a question of *pay*. The morality of an action was unquestioned if it was to be rewarded with a full purse.

"It seem," continued Turner, "that the captain has had you to assist him in several jobs of this kind before. Does it pay well?"

"Twict. In Lunnon. First rate—drive ha long," answered Blanchard, whose answers were rather terse, though sufficiently expressive.

"Where are we to take her? That is about all that is to be settled upon."

"Find ha place. Get ha humpy 'ouse somewhere, and fix hup ha room to receive 'er."

"Well, I'll look up the house, and to-morrow evening meet me here about this time to arrange our plans in a definite manner. There must be no bungling work; the girl is to disappear in such a manner that we leave behind no trace by which we may be followed."

"Trust hus for that."

"Then you can return to your cards and I will try to get a little sleep. This riding about is enough to wear out a man made of any thing less durable than cast-iron."

Tom left the room, when the door was locked from within. For some time, Turner stood looking musingly out the window. Not until the clock, striking nine, had aroused him from his reverie, did he throw himself upon the bed for the needed rest and sleep.

When the tory arose the next morning, he passed half an hour in private conference with Jim Fagan; and, though he did not betray any of the secrets intrusted to his keeping, he nevertheless, for a consideration, received—or rather was to receive—valuable assistance. Fagan undertook to provide the room in which the young girl was to be imprisoned, although he abstained from mentioning that it would be in an unrented building which belonged to him.

In the afternoon, Fagan took Preston's agent to see the house.

It was a little stone structure, which looked as though it might have been a hundred years old. Standing almost alone, near the edge of town—massive, strong, its walls impenetrable to sound—a more desirable place could not be found. The windows were closed with shutters, and the building appeared deserted; but when the Irishman knocked at the door, it was opened by a grim looking old negress, who surlily surveyed the party, and seemed more inclined to slam the door in their faces than to ask them to enter.

Fagan requested her to show the furnished room up stairs. The negress seemed scarcely to understand what was wanted of her, but at length led them up the stairway. The room chosen charmed the eye of Turner. The windows were secured with thick, oaken shutters, guarded on the inside by padlocks, the door was strongly made, and the strength of the lock precluded the possibility of a future inmate's forcing it. The furniture was simple. A table, a dressing-stand, half a dozen chairs and a bedstead. There were no clothes on the bed, but Fagan expressed himself willing to furnish these.

Perfectly satisfied with every thing, Turner withdrew, and, after some conversation with the negress, Fagan followed. Thus the preliminaries were settled, and that evening, when Tom Blanchard and Timothy Turner met, it was agreed that on the second succeeding night the attempt should be made.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONSUMMATION OF THE CRIME.

DARK night settled around the dwelling of the widow Vale. The clouds of an approaching storm obscured the moon. Only a chance ray would beam out, like a beautiful face from behind the black of a mourning veil. The summer breeze, however strongly would softly lift the plain white curtain that hung at the open window of Catherine's room; and then, as if ashamed of the thought of entering the chamber, would drop it with a sigh of regret. The heat, for the season of the year, was by no means oppressive, and the inmates of the house were buried in deep slumber, for the hour was late.

Good eyes might have failed to detect the three men stealing up to the house; moving, with noiseless steps, through the darkness.

The horses had been left by the road side, where there was little danger of their being discovered—the darkness was too thick, the road too little frequented. The three men were, Turner, Blanchard, and another; one proposed as an assistant, by Tom, and for whose faithfulness that gentleman expressed his willingness to go bail.

Wake! lally, wake! A viper has drawn his loathsome form over the window sill, and now gloats over his prey!

To call now were in vain. With a hand of iron, the man places a bandage over the maiden's mouth, while he tightly grasps her throat, choking back her scream of terror. Tom Blanchard was now at his side; and, together, they quickly but silently secured their victim. Carefully wrapping the bed-clothes about the form of the half-strangled girl, they bore her away to where the horses were waiting.

The inmates of the house—Mrs. Vale and a couple of black servants—remained buried in a profound slumber; Catherine could give no outcry, and even faithful old Lion was strangely

inclined to somnolency. The daring deed was consummated with every success. Catherine was indeed in the power of monsters.

The ride that night was a long and a gloomy one, but an hour before the sun arose, a valuable bundle entered the door of the cottage of Jim Fagan. Catherine had long since become insensible from her fright and harsh usage.

The sun was high up when Catherine came to her senses, and realized her situation.

She did not scream, but on the contrary arose, and by the light of the lamp which sat upon the table, proceeded to dress. Then, she sat quietly down to consider her circumstances.

Where she was she could not divine. The windows were closed by thick oaken shutters, which would not permit the smallest ray of light to pass through them, and, according to appearances, the only light which it would be permitted her to use would be that of the lamp now burning on the table.

The cogitations of the maiden were, however, destined, for a time at least, to be interrupted. The key of the huge lock turned slowly, and with a creaking sound, then the door swung open, disclosing to Catherine the repulsive countenance of the negress who had charge of the building. Fagan had procured her to wait upon the lovely tenant of his cottage. The woman approached the table, bearing before her, on a waiter, that which was to be Catherine's breakfast.

Kate was a daughter of bravery. Her heart swelled in its indignation. She addressed the old woman in a commanding tone, and demanded to know where she was, and for what reason she had been brought thither.

The sullen eyes of the negro woman flashed for an instant, but she replied in a numbling tone: "If miss want me hear, ma mus' speak loud. Dis chile be berry old, an' don't hear nuffin."

The question was repeated in a louder tone. It must have been deep ears, indeed, that could not have caught the sound of the girl's ringing voice.

"Dis house be fass on de land, sizz; an' you is in it jist 'cause some pesson want's you here, I s'pose. Dat's a lie."

"And who is that person?"

"Find dat out, I s'pec's, when he comes to see you. Yah, yah!"

It was useless to question the woman. She had received her instructions from Turner, but was cute enough to understand that he was only the agent, not the master. Kate for a moment gave way to tears. The negress, seeing her beautiful charge thus moved, became somewhat pitiful, offered a word of consolation:

"Bless yer, honey, don't be skeered, now. No one gwine to hurt yer; only here 'cause gemman wants to show how he lubs yer!"

This speech, spoken by the old woman for the purpose of allaying, had the effect of increasing the excitement of the poor, bewildered girl.

"See here, missus. I bring a bit of breakfast for de lady, and if we talk so, de coffee git cold. Come, take suthin'."

Feeling the necessity of husbanding her strength as much as possible, to enable her to act bravely her part in that which was sure to come, the young girl was about partaking of the food, when a sudden thought struck her, "Was not this refreshment drugged?" She did not think it possible, after a few seconds of reflection, but could not refrain from turning and fixing her eye upon the old negress at the same time, with a searching glance, saying, "How am I to know that this food is not drugged? How dare I eat it?"

"Law bless ye! I fix um wid dese ere hands, an' nebber put nothin' in to hurt any thin'. Dis chile fur fair play, an' wouldn't do no such a thing for nothin'. If you want's, I eat half of ebry thing I brings up."

"No! there is no necessity for that. I am satisfied."

Leaving Catherine to partake of the breakfast, let us return to the despoiled home of her widowed mother.

Though Catherine's voice was not heard at the usual hour, the next morning, Mrs. Vale did not feel alarmed. Thinking that her daughter had merely overslept herself, the good woman was loth to awaken her, and it was not until, to her, a late hour, that she tapped at the door of the bedroom. No answer. Mrs. Vale again rapped. Again, no answer. She opened the door. A glance at the bed showed it to be empty!

That open window—the disordered state of the room—the mark of a man's feet all around in the soft grass, told to the

quick and trained eye of the mother that a great sorrow had come upon her now. She flew out—traced the tracks to the road, discovered the imprints of the horses' feet—marked their number and the direction they had taken. Then retracing her steps she entered her home—now a prison to her—for its light was fled.

As we have already hinted, the Vales, if not rich, were at least well off, and owned a couple of servants. One of these, a negro man, was called. He hastened to answer the unusual summons, but a clattering of hoofs caused her to look out upon the road. With an exclamation of joy she beheld her son coming rapidly toward the house.

Young Vale dashed up to the gate, and, hastily throwing the reins over his horse's neck, dismounted. Approaching his mother with an air of respect, he tenderly embraced her, imprinting a kiss upon her forehead.

"My son," said she, "you come at a moment of great disaster to us. Had you not come at this moment, I would have sent for you, though it be unsafe for you to be seen about your home."

Alarmed by the serious look of his mother, the young soldier exclaimed: "Good heavens! what has happened?"

"It may not be dreadful, but it is sad, indeed. *Your sister is gone!*"

"Gone?" shouted the trooper. "Not dead? How? when? where?"

"Calm yourself, my son, she is not dead; at least, I do not think so. She disappeared last night—was torn violently from her room."

"Disappeared! torn from her room! By whom? Say quickly!" he almost shouted, while his eyes fairly flashed fire.

"There is the mystery," she said, pointing to the tracks in the grass, and to the imprints of the horses' feet in the dust of road before the gate.

John beheld these evidences of the presence of men and horses. He made a close scrutiny of every foot print as if in them could be read a history of every thing which had occurred on the previous night. He then inspected the chamber room, the bed, the closet, the corners of the room, all were closely searched. Under a chair which stood by the bedside,

he spied a small piece of white paper. He picked it up and read:

"All ready, as soon as you like. You can trust the woman for a jailer as long as you *pay* her, but no longer.

"JEM."

It was not calculated to throw any definite light on the subject.

"Mother, whom do you suspect? There must be *some* one who could be reasonably supposed to have had a hand in this for it is plain she has been abducted. She never left this of her own accord."

"Alas! my son, there is one whom I suspect, though I am loth to mention his name. It is one whom I suspected to be a villain from the time I first saw him."

"Who is it? No one whom I know? Speak!"

"No, my son; it is one whose name, in all probability, you have never heard. It is the British officer named Preston, who commands the detachment which is stationed at the house of Mr. Tappan."

"Then you suspect this 'foreign gentleman' of having done this foul thing? Tell me *why*, for, if you can make out a clear case, I will shoot him like a dog the first time I meet him. Yes, shoot him even if I have to lie in wait for him, by day and night."

The calm, desperate tone in which this was uttered, caused the widow a shudder. Mrs. Vale seemed to be terrified, and raised her hand to deprecate such a threat, while she continued the explanation which had been interrupted.

"Do not talk so of blood, John. Remember the divine command, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay it.' If you can but rescue her from the hands into which she has fallen, it will be sufficient for us to rejoice at. These are my reasons for suspecting Preston:—Having caught sight of Catherine when he stopped to search the house for rebels, he renewed the visit through a pretense which, unfortunately, was afforded him. Though he received little encouragement, again and again he returned. A few days ago he was here, when Kate and he had some conversation which did not appear to suit him, for he left apparently in high disgust. Since then I have not

seen him. Who else could have caused the deed to be done I scarce can conjecture. That, John, is all I have to tell. Do nothing rashly, for remember I speak nothing with perfect confidence."

"Fear not but that I shall act with all prudence. I will search high and low for her, but I will find her."

"Be careful lest you run your head into the lion's jaws, and lest your mother be compelled, instead of rejoicing to see a daughter saved, to mourn that daughter lost, and a son sacrificed. But listen! look to your safety, for I hear the tread of horsemen. Look to your safety, if you would preserve your liberty."

Fortunately, the negro man was of quick wit. He perceived that his presence would be unnecessary, but noticing that the bridle of John's horse was carelessly thrown over a post which was on the road, and in full view of all passers by, he—very considerably for the young man—led the horse behind the house. When he returned to shake hands with John—for this was the first time he had been at home since he joined the brigade—and learned the momentous things on which his master and mistress were talking, he stood stupified. The noise on the road recalled his wandering senses, and he told what disposition he had made of his horse. John, contrary to commands of his mother, refused to seek safety in flight, and preferred entering the house.

Captain Reginald Preston, escorted by four dragoons, soon came in view.

At first sight, the captain seemed about to pass by; but, as if by a second thought, he reined in his steed, dismounted and walked towards Mrs. Vale with a cheerful smile on his face.

"Ah! my dear Mrs. Vale," said he, "I thought I would stop for a moment to inquire after your health, and that of your charming daughter."

The widow's face grew frightfully pale as she responded: "My health is but poor, and as for Catherine, she is gone, sir!"

"Then it is done!" said Preston, speaking to himself; but, in so unguarded a manner that one with a quick ear and eye could make out the words.

"What is this you tell me?" continued he. "Gone! What

mean you by that word? Has she died, eloped, or was she *abducted*?"

"She was stolen away, sir," said the mother, speaking very sternly. "Stolen away, but by whom I much wish to know. Can you tell me who it might be?"

Reginald turned pale when this question was so directly put to him, but he quickly responded in a light, heartless tone: "Indeed, madam, I cannot. Were I but acquainted with such a secret it would indeed kill me to keep it from you."

"Then let it kill you!" cried a voice deep with passion; the door of the house, which had been ajar, was flung open, while on the threshold, white with rage, stood John Vale. In either hand he held a loaded pistol.

Surprise, for the moment, held Preston motionless and speechless; the sudden apparition completely unnerving him. Recovering, by a great effort, his presence of mind, he turned to his men who had not yet dismounted, and shouted: "Shoot him down! shoot the rebel down! Forward, men, and—"

As Reginald spoke, he drew his sword; but, whatever else he would have told his comrades, was left unsaid—a ball from the pistol of John Vale had done its work. The dragoons hastily snatching their pistols from their holsters, fired, but apparently without effect, for the rebel disappeared again, closing the door behind him. The stout oak door withstood the rush made against it by the four soldiers, and it was some time before they ventured to enter by the window. When, however, they did venture in, they found a window on the opposite side of the room, thrown wide open, and beheld far over the fields, a black steed bearing away, right gallantly, the young avenger.

Seeing pursuit was hopeless, the troopers deemed it necessary to go to the assistance of their captain.

They found him weltering in his blood, a ball having entered his right arm near the shoulder, and another the left thigh some distance above the knee joint. The supposition was, that Vale had fired both pistols together, for but one explosion had been heard.

Notwithstanding the wrongs which Mrs. Vale had good reason to suppose she had received at the hands of this man, she had lifted his head and was endeavoring to staunch the

blood that flowed from the shoulder. When the four men approached, she ordered them to carry him into the house. They obeyed, and the man who merited so little kindness, was laid on one of the willow's softest beds. Neither of the wounds was likely to prove fatal, and for this she was thankful.

Seeing that the captain was comfortable, one of the men set off to apprise his second officer of the affair, and learn what measures it would be best to take under the circumstances. If it could possibly be done, the captain should be removed from his present situation, for the house of Mrs. Vale was not large enough to lodge the troop, and if only part of it was left near the captain, an immediate attack from Nat Ershaw's brigade could reasonably be expected.

In an hour the man returned with the first lieutenant and twenty men. They found Preston pale and weak from the loss of blood, but still able to be moved, and Mrs. Vale was soon left in quiet possession of her house.

When Reginald returned to his quarters he was much exhausted, but, by the next morning was recruited enough to write a long letter to the commander at Charleston. The exact manner in which the wound was received, he of course did not take pains to explain, for there might have appeared that which would have set inquiries on foot which the captain would rather not excite. He sought to create the impression that John Vale was a cold blooded assassin, who without any provocation, fired upon his victim from an ambush.

The answer to this letter was just such as had been wished for. On the strength of his wound, another officer was sent to fill his place, and Preston obtained permission to return to Charleston. Thus, his scheme with regard to Catherine, was actually furthered by the results of the assault of the young girl's brother.

It was still early in the morning. Nat Ershaw was standing alone under the shade of a cedar-tree, thinking of his absent friend and the sister who now was the star of light to the soul of the brave patriot. From this reverie he was aroused by the sharp, peremptory challenge of the sentinel posted at the outskirts of the swamp.

"Friend!" shouted the horseman, and, without slackening his pace, he dashed over the narrow neck of safe ground directly towards the spot where Ernschaw was standing.

Nat recognized his friend, and exclaimed: "Good heavens! What brings you here so soon?"

"The British are at our house, and my sister has disappeared—was stolen away last night by three mounted men, and she carried her away by the road which leads to Charleston."

"Stolen away! Catherine gone! O God! is this so?" cried the captain. He was too startled at the news, and big tears burst from his eyes. He quickly, however, controlled his feelings, and then his flushed face and quick words showed that the brave man within him was ready for action. "Have they left no traces behind by which they may be recognized?"

"None but this;" and John showed the note which he had picked up in his sister's room.

"You have suspicions, though?"

"Yes; and well grounded ones, too. The man whom I suspect—whom my mother suspects—is a captain in the British army. He came into my presence this morning, and I shot him down, as I would have shot a dog."

"If *he* had a hand in the abduction, she must not be far distant, for he could not make his reappearance so suddenly."

"He probably was not present when the deed was done; but that it was planned by him, and executed *for* him, I can have but little doubt. No one else had any motive for such an act. Alas, Nathaniel! my sister is even now in Charleston, I have every reason to fear."

"Be calm, John. If you have killed the fellow, the chances are that Kate will be set at liberty, as no excuse could offer for her retention in Charleston."

"Unfortunately I am not sure that the villain is dead, or even mortally wounded. I fired in a hurry, and so great was my agitation I much fear I have missed mortally wounding him."

"But, what can we do? If Catherine has been carried to Charleston, we can do but little to effect her rescue. It would be almost certain death to risk ourselves within the limits of the city."

ing "And yet it must be done," said Vale in a firm tone.

de "Yes! you are right. One of us *must* enter Charleston; and though the risk is terrible, it may be that we can enter unobserved. After once being fairly landed, there will be but little danger of arrest."

ap "One thing, Erskine, I have not yet mentioned; I believe that Turner had a hand in this deed. It is only another sin," added to his long list of sins, and the first time we or any other true patriot chances to meet him, unless he can purchase his life by revealing some secret which may be of importance to us, he should be strung up without judge or jury."

no "You are right. The villain has always hated me, and since Kate's refusal of him he has been heard to vow vengeance even against her:—so she has informed me."

I "I am only afraid that your conjecture is but too true. Should I meet him, the wretch shall receive the reward due him for his misdeeds. But about the expedition into Charleston? Would it not be better for both of us to go? In any kind of adventure two are better than one, and you may wish for my assistance should you set out alone."

r "Impossible. One of us must remain with the men. Besides, if we go together the chances are, should either be captured, the other would share the same fate."

; "And what would be more agreeable, Joan, for us, who as friends, have always lived together, to die together?"

i "You may say that, Nat, but I think it would be a great deal more pleasant for us both to live than both to die. Is it not so?"

a "Of course."

y "Then only one of us will go, and that one, of course, will be me."

"And why?"

"Because; if I am captured you will still be at liberty, and through your exertions I will be enabled to effect my escape."

"I see now;" said the patriot captain; "and I feel free to acknowledge that you are right. Of course you, as Catherine's brother, must be the one to go. What steps are taken, must be immediate. I would advise you to prepare for the undertaking in an hour, and Heaven grant that you prosper!"

Was it an echo that repeated the words: "Heaven will grant that you prosper?" As Vale turned away, Nat heard them as plainly as he had heard his own.

CHAPTER X.

AN UNWELCOME RECOGNITION.

Young Vale was a man of strong will. Sorrow and rage at his sister's disappearance did not blind his reason. Knowing that he must take care of his own safety, if he would do aught for her's, all his actions were governed with the utmost prudence.

As there were numerous Tories, well acquainted with him, residing in the city, he did not deem it prudent to venture in without a disguise sufficiently impenetrable to deceive all prying eyes. The disguise was effected in a satisfactory manner: his own mother would have looked twice before she recognized in the clothopper, wending his way along the road, her own good-looking son.

It was sundown when the queer-looking figure of the patriot might have been seen wending its way along a rather deserted-looking street, looking to the right and left in a staring, half-silly sort of manner, so natural to those who, totally unacquainted either in heart or mind, look upon some strange scene for the first time.

Three or four soldiers, in red uniforms, came staggering down the street, evidently just from a visit to a tippling-house. These the youth carefully avoided by giving them the sidewalk and himself taking the street. A loud laugh was raised as they passed, for there was something truly ludicrous about the countryman; and he joined in the laugh as though not perceiving it was against himself. After having passed the soldiers, the sidewalk was regained and the lonely march continued.

A stop was finally made before a small building which our readers will hardly be surprised to learn was inhabited by the

family of Simon Hunt, the blacksmith, who had, on two occasions, sent to Ershaw and his men most important intelligence. It being so near dark, the blacksmith himself was at home, and answered the knock which came thundering against his door. The person whom he perceived to be standing on the steps was perfectly unknown to him; nevertheless he bid him enter.

When the two entered the room, Simon turned, and, by the light of a candle, surveyed the other with a long and scrutinizing look. The countenance somehow seemed familiar, but it was only after hearing him speak that the worthy smith was able to say, "Your name is Vale, is it not?"

"Right, sir—my name is Vale; and yours, I believe, is Simon Hunt?"

"It is."

"Then allow me, before proceeding any further, to thank you for the services you have done to Ershaw and his men, as well as to the holy cause of liberty."

"Never mind about them; I have done nothing which I wouldn't wish to do again; and you had better thank another one whose name I can not tell you, but who was the person that furnished me with all the information that I have had."

"Well, Mr. Hunt, to whoever the thanks are due, to him or them, let them be earnestly given. It was not for this I came here, disguised in this dress; and, though any assistance which you can render me will be but small, still, little as it may be, I shall feel thankful for it."

"I am with you," said Hunt, decisively.

Vale told the story of the outrage briefly. It stirred the soul of the blacksmith deeply, and his lips were not slow in uttering his sentiments. He asked to share John's search, and to be permitted the privilege of avenging her wrongs. The only service which was now required was to endeavor to find some traces of Catherine; and, in case any thing went wrong with Vale, to send immediate intelligence of it to Nat Ershaw.

"Now that we understand each other," finally interposed Hunt, "I suppose that you will stop at my house, for the present, at least."

"Under other circumstances, I would be happy to do so,"

responded Vale; "but, at present, it would not be prudent. If any thing evil should chance to befall me, you might be placed in a bad predicament."

"Poh! never mind that. If any one should inquire about you, why, we will call you my wife's cousin; and I defy any one to recognize you under *that* disguise."

"There is another reason why I should not accept your hospitality, and that is this: I have already engaged lodgings at a rather obscure looking inn, and, having paid a week in advance, for the landlord did not seem inclined to trust me with lodging before seeing the color of my money. If I should not make my reappearance, it might excite suspicion and cause inquiry to be made. Of course, that is the last thing I would have to happen."

"Perhaps it will be better; but remember that you are welcome to count on me for *any* assistance, or to use my home as your home during your stay in the city. We are fellow-workers for freedom and the right, and that gives you a full claim to my sympathy."

"You will, doubtless, soon see me; meanwhile be on the alert to catch any loose information which may be within reach. If, at any time, you wish to communicate with me, you will find me at the 'Traveler's Home,' kept by Jim Fagan."

These were John Vale's last words; and half an hour later found him sitting in the front room at Fagan's.

Notwithstanding the smallness of his hotel, Fagan seemed to do a good business, and it kept the red-headed boy at the bar busily engaged to satisfy the wants of the numerous applicants for his villainous beverages. Vale, still in disguise, sat in a corner, never speaking, but carefully noting all that was said or done around him. Some of those who were sitting by cast a glance of inquiry at the queer-looking figure, but they evidently had no suspicion of his real character, only wondering what brought him into Fagan's place. The "Traveler's Home" was a quiet enough house in the daytime, and even at night a stranger was in no danger of being insulted or maltreated within its precincts; but the men who frequented it after nightfall were of rather doubtful, if not of desperate character, and it was not without the repute of being no better

than a gambling-den. Vale knew nothing of the character of the place when he first secured lodgings there.

He was destined to learn much of the place and its "patrons" before he again entered the confines of Cedar Swamp.

The crowd kept growing larger and larger, until the space in front of the bar was quite filled with men, young and old—all drinking, talking, and smoking. Fagan stood at one end of the bar, occasionally assigning his red-haired and masculine Hobe, but keeping a watchful eye in his head to see that his property was neither injured nor improperly confiscated. As he had, several times, subjected Vale to a close scrutiny, the rebel had thought it best to endeavor to allay any lurking suspicion which the tavern-keeper might have, and so he staggered up to the bar and called for a glass of beer.

This being finished, the young man lit a pipe and vigorously pulled away at it. Whatever Fagan might have thought before, after seeing this performance of Vale's, all suspicion was allayed, and his grim countenance relaxed with a smile.

Hardly had Vale taken his seat, when, from among the crowd, a man elbowed his way to the bar where Jim stood. Leaning over, he addressed the landlord in a tone too low for John to hear the question, but the answer, incautiously given in a rather loud tone, sent a thrill to the heart of the honest patriot.

"You know, Harry," said Fagan, "that Turner has hired the place for a couple of weeks, and I guess it would be better to let any thing of the kind alone for the present."

"All right?" responded Harry. "Some of the boys were speaking about it, and I gave 'em the same answer you gave me, without mentioning Turner's name; but, to make the thing sure, I thought I'd speak with you about the matter."

"There's no harm done by your speaking; but, if it's necessary, we can enter by the garden way without troubling the other part of the house. Have you heard from Bob yet, about how he's getting along?"

"Nary word."

After this laconic answer, "Harry" disappeared in the crowd, leaving Jim to attend to his customers. John Vale was strongly excited by what he had just overheard. That Captain Preston had used Turner as an instrument with

which to abduct Catherine, was not doubted—the conversation between Fagan and “Harry” had set him on the trail; and the point now was to find out of what house they had been speaking. He did not anticipate much difficulty in doing that; and when once he lit upon the spot, Vale thought it would go hard with him if he could not, by hook or crook, manage to discover if Catherine was there hidden, and to rescue her from the clutches of the ruffians who had abducted her.

The hours passed slowly, until it came to tea o'clock. John was earnestly considering about the best means of leaving his corner, crossing the room, and making his exit from the opposite door without running against any one who might chauce to take advantage of his seeming simplicity to annoy him. Though in a good humor, the crowd seemed to be well primed with liquor, and it would take but little to involve the whole roomful in a general row. After half rising to his feet, he sank back again into his seat. Words of altercation attracted his attention. A big, rough-looking man was saying something in an angry tone to some one concealed from the eyes of Vale by the crowd. Curiosity impelled the young man to take his stand upon a bench in order that he might get a glimpse of the man who was being berated. What was his surprise to recognize the cat-like countenance of Timothy Turner. That worthy did not seem in the least troubled by the invectives hurled against him, but waited quietly until the large man had concluded. Then raising his hand and making a peculiar sign with his forefinger, he remarked:

“Keep cool, Bob Wynstay. If I shoved against your sore arm, you ought to be thankful I don't tell how it got hurt.”

The sign which the tory made seemed to have a remarkably relative effect upon the big man, and he only answered:

“What the —— do you run against a fellow that way for? Aren't it bad enough to have a broken arm, without having it punched by every one that chooses to elbow me about?”

“A man with a broken arm ought to keep out of a crowd, and then he wouln't get it hurt,” responded Turner.

The crowd made way for him—he seemed to be well known to those around him—and Turner passed on, casting a quick glance around him. For an instant his eye rested on John

Vale's face, and the gaze, quick and keen, filled the heart of the disguised patriot with apprehension. Whether or no, he was recognized, Vale could scarce tell; but he felt that it would be well to make his exit as soon as possible. Turner, though a traitor, and, at heart, a coward, was a man of great caution and was possessed of extraordinary perception. Knowing the hatred the fellow felt for him, John could but think that his destruction would be certain, surrounded as he was by enemies, if the tory should recognize him.

Fagan and the new comer had a few words of conversation, and the landlord left the room, but almost immediately returned, followed by Tom Blanchard and several soldiers who had been playing cards in a back room. Pointing at Vale, Turner said, in a loud voice: "Secure your man! I accuse him of being a rebel, and of entering this place as a spy."

The three soldiers made a rush forward. Vale drew a brace of pistols.

"He is a dead man who attempts to lay hands on me!"

"Take him, I say!" shouted Tim.

"Dastard! I defy *you*!" now shouted John, who rose to his utmost height and looked as if one word more would precipitate him upon the treacherous scoundrel.

"Yes! because I am unarmed, I suppose," the tory whispered.

"A coward and traitor always seeks for some excuse for his baseness!" said Vale.

"He is a spy, for he calls me traitor. Soldiers, you are armed—will you take him, or shall he be allowed to escape? I have reason to fear he is not alone on these premises. Off to the guard house with him, quick!" said Tim, white with rage and fear.

Two soldiers stepped forward to seize him. Two pistols flashed in their faces, and the men fell back, wounded and stunned.

In an instant a half-dozen men were on the patriot, and, bearing him to the floor, secured him after a struggle which proved how great was the strength and will of the young boy.

In the *meantime*, Turner escaped; and when John arose to his feet, with his arms bound behind him, his eyes sought in vain for the traitor.

"Your friend 'as concluded to 'elp his," remarked Blanchard, rather humorously inclined, "by making tracks for the lines. The 'ole garrison will soon be here: so come along young chap, and we'll show you the hinterior of his good a bake-hoven as you hever grinned hover."

And amid the laughs and jeers of the crowd, John was forced away to the guard cells.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAPTOR AND THE CAPTIVE.

Two days have passed since Catherine was made a prisoner. She has seen no one but the old negress. Her room was only lighted by a lamp, every ray of the sun having been carefully shut out. Several times she had thought of attempting to overpower the negress, but, though old, that personage promised no easy victory; and then, though no other person had entered the room, yet the steps of some one were always heard accompanying the colored woman on her journey up the stairs. If Kate should even be successful in the attempt to overpower the negress, she knew not when she might meet in her flight from the room. Envirced by guards, her only resource was to place herself in the hands of Providence and await the end.

Seated by the table, her head resting upon her arms, her mind absorbed in its own misery, Kate scarce heard the noise made by the opening of her door. The sharp click of the bolt as it was shot back to its place by the turning of the key, however, startled her; and when her eyes, all red and swollen from weeping, were raised, they fell upon the form of a man, standing by the door with the key in his hand. At the first glance she did not recognize him, for he was clad in a long cloak, while his hat was drawn down over his eyes; but, when he threw back his cloak, and removed his hat, she exclaimed, in the agony of her surprise, "Captain Preston?"

"Yes, I am he," said Reginald, taking a seat. "Reginald

Preston, at your service, Miss Vale; one who has loved you does now, and always will."

Perhaps there was something of mockery in his tone as the officer spoke of love; for, at his words, Catherine grew pale, and visibly trembled—her courage, for the moment, gone.

"Do you then go," said Preston, seeing that Catherine would not or could not speak, "who it is that has shown himself so solicitous for your welfare? Foolish girl! you reject my offers and think you can toss me off as a child's plaything; but you shall find me one *not* to be thwarted."

A sob was the only answer. Such a sob! It went to the heart even of that unfeeling profligate. Tears sometimes effect what a world in arms could never accomplish. The heart of the British captain was moved—he had not expected tears. But it was only for a moment; then the old flood of passion rushed over him again, and the good angel of pity was driven scornfully away. He grew haughty and bade her be silent. Then burst forth: "Girl, better for you to have died than to have done as you have. Wantoning in beauty as you are, you have led me on till I made a fool of myself—till I was mad enough to actually dream of allying myself to one so far beneath me in rank; then, comes on it, you tell me to leave you, that I can never be beloved, casting me aside with as little ceremony as if I had been an old garment. Now hear me! Mine you are, body and soul. Mine till, tired of you, I throw you aside as recklessly as a worn-out coat. Weep over it. Shed bitter tears; but so it is, and no spark of pity shall show itself. As you had no pity on me, thus it shall be returned; and that to the last, my country beauty."

In the man hissing out these sentences, it would have been difficult to recognize the one who had whispered so many soft words in women's ears—who seemed, to the casual observer, to be the true gentleman, well-bred and courteous at the heart. He had spoken too much, however. All the trepidation in the heart of the girl was now gone; the true woman had come back to her, and she was now daring enough to encounter a dozen such wretches.

"You tell, sir, what is untrue, when you insinuate that I ever did ought to inspire you with a passion for me. From the first moment I saw you, I feared you, and my forebodings

have only proved too true. Urged on by your own perverse passion, you have sought to bend me to your will; but, being failed when you used fair means, you have descended to foul. But here, as before, you shall not succeed. If needs be, I can die; but, sir, dread the avenging of that death! Whether I go from here alive or not, I tell you I hate and defy you!"

Maddened with anger, Reginald strode forward as though about to strike her. With a quick spring Kate reached the table, and seizing a heavy pitcher, she collectedly waited for him to attempt his worst. This action served to restrain Preston. His arm had not yet recovered from the wound received at the hands of John Vale, and was supported in a sling.

"That proud spirit of yours *shall* bend, and the fire that sparkles in your eye *shall* dim, ere many days have flown. For the present rest undisturbed, and while you have time, think whether it be not better to concillate than to defy."

He turned away, unlocked the door, and removed his hateful presence from Catherine's sight.

"By heavens!" he muttered, as he gained the passage; "it were better for me not to attempt a passage-at-arms till this arm of mine gets stronger. I believe she would as soon scatter my brains with that pitcher as wring the neck of a young chicken. Chicken! bah! I'm more than half one, myself, to let her rant on as she did, and then run away for fear of doing something worthy of future repentance! When I should be cool I got into the very white heat of passion; and if there was any thing to be gained in becoming so, I would be cold as an iceberg! A man has to study hard before he can become a match for a woman's tongue and fingers."

A walk of some distance brought the gallant captain to the quarters of the commander-in-chief. Although it was late for a visit, yet as Sir Henry had expressed a desire for an interview, Preston thought it best not to stand on ceremony. Accordingly he knocked at the door, and was admitted by Sir Henry's black servant, Sampson. He found the general engaged in reading and answering a number of letters.

After salutations and the captain had taken a seat, General Clinton remarked, at the same time picking up a letter, "Well, Captain Preston, I am afraid that your return to England is indeed indefinitely postponed."

"Then our fears are realized?"

"Do not say *our* fears, for, to tell the truth, I had not much doubt when I received the first intelligence. Of course under your present circumstances, you will hardly think of leaving the army, and by letters that I received yesterday, the question as to who are the heirs is completely settled. I have interested myself in this matter as feeling an interest in you, on account of the friendship I bore your father. I did not wish to speak too confidently at first, but, well acquainted as I was with your genealogy, I felt assured that in case any of the Vales were living, they were the heirs."

"It is bad enough, but the reverse of fortune must be as bravely borne as a defeat. I shall beat a retreat in good order, sir. One thing is certain, though, and that is that Smith, Jones, and the rest of the firm, will have to wait for the repayment of the little loan of a hundred pound note which they were so kind as to offer me—and which, of course, I accepted. Perhaps next time they will not be quite so eager after clients."

"They should have been more careful how they excited hopes which were not to be gratified. But something may turn up in your favor before the close of the war. Read that letter, and you will have a clearer view of the case, perhaps."

Reginald seized the letter that was tossed to him, and gave it an attentive perusal. After he had finished he did not speak for some time; what he had read gave him much food for meditation. His moral sense having been blunted by the life which he had for years been leading, crimes which, even a few months ago, would have appeared most black, now suggested themselves most naturally to his mind; and great as was the wrong which he had perpetrated upon the family of his relations, the Vales, he was laying the plot for another every way as foul. Could Sir Henry have looked into the soul of the man who sat beside him, he would have loathed his very sight. Perhaps it is for some wise purpose that villains stalk through the world, unpunished and unpunished. Divinity uses strange means to work its ends, and the mystery of sin is the mystery of Him who made us. As, from the the principle of sin arose the need of redemption for man, mayhap from the success which sometimes waits on evil thinkers and doers, some principle as vastly grand and important is about to be established.

"I see," said Preston, at length, "no hopes left for me to hang on, after perusing *that* letter. No doubt but that the money goes to the Vales. The fact of the young man being engaged in rebellion can make no difference; this is a case in which, for the present at least, confiscation would be of no avail. Such has always been my fortune: hopes raised to be dashed down, anticipations indulged which can never be realized."

What answer the general would have made must be surmised, for he was interrupted by the announcement of Sampson, that Timothy Turner demanded audience.

As the tory entered, he made a low bow to the commander, and then, noticing with a start and a smile the presence of Captain Preston, he bowed to that worthy.

"For what, Mr. Turner, are we indebted to your presence at this rather unseasonable hour?" queried Sir Henry in a tone which implied severity of feeling.

"Why, to come to the point without waste of words, a young man by the name of Vale, a deep-dyed rebel, has been apprehended within the limits of the city, dressed in disguise, and there being some difficulty to decide what should be done with him, I made bold to come to you to state the case, and ask your commands with regard to him."

A smile of satisfaction played upon the captain's face as he heard this. The sister he had in his hands, the brother was as good as dead, and all that was requisite now was to prosecute vigorously the attack; the fortune which seemed to have oozed from his fingers would again soon be within his grasp!

General Clinton's countenance, on the contrary, betrayed an emotion of pain. But he continued his interrogatories: "Are you certain that he is a rebel?"

"No doubt concerning that. He drew a brace of pistols and dangerously wounded two men before we could manage to effect his capture. He is safe enough now, but had he held a sword in his hand, I believe he would have defeated our whole party."

"Well, I will send an officer to attend to the matter, and meanwhile receive the thanks of the king for having so assiduously aided his cause."

To stay longer would have been useless; so Turner de-

parted, revolving the pleasing thought in his mind that the harvest of revenge was about to be reaped, and the family of the rebel made to feel the enmity which he had so long cherished against them.

After Turner, at intervals, followed two others. The first Preston, who turned his footsteps toward his lodgings, seeking quiet that he might think over the various events which had occurred that day. The second, Sampson, the patriotic servant of the commander, who played the spy at the risk of his life. His footsteps were turned toward the dwelling of Simon Hunt, and his mission to inform that honest-hearted man of the danger to which John Vale was exposed. Through the darkness of the night, through dark and unfrequented streets, he glided as silently as a shadow, until, at length, he reached the house of the blacksmith.

Although Simon was buried in sleep, the signal of Sampson awakened him, and without hesitation the negro was admitted. When he heard of the capture of the young man who but a few hours before had stood under that very roof, he did not seem surprised, but replied: "A great pity. I was afraid it would turn out so, though he was so well disguised. According to his request I will have to send word some way or other to Nat Ernshaw."

"Dey keep him berry tight, an' I 'fraid Master Vale be done gone dis time," said Sampson.

"Not if firm friends, stout hearts, and strong arms can get him away. But I must get word to Ernshaw before to-morrow noon, or he may come too late."

"Now I got somethin' else to tell you," responded the negro; and for half an hour the two continued the conversation. At the end of that time they parted, one to hasten home, the other to hasten the news of John's capture to Ernshaw.

CHAPTER XII.

IN PERILOUS CIRCUMSTANCES.

Young Simon Hunt by this time, it must be admitted, ought to have some knowledge of the roads leading from the outskirts of Charleston to Cedar Swamp and its environs, inasmuch as he had twice already traversed them for the sake of his country's welfare; and old Simon, remembering the adage that, "The pitcher may go to the well once too often," had some misgivings as to the result. As he had no other messenger in whom he could place implicit confidence, he finally concluded again to send his tried boy—a son worthy of his brave sire. It was by no means a safe business, this carrying messages from Charleston to a band of rebels; and once caught at it, there was little doubt in the mind of Hunt but that the boy, young as he was, would be speedily strung up as a warning to all who, in the future, might feel inclined to attempt to become post-riders with news for an enemy.

Young Simon Hunt threw the saddle upon the back of the good roan, and having partaken of a substantial breakfast, was ready to start full an hour before sunrise.

Twice on his journey was he intercepted by those whom he had reason to dread. Once, when but a few miles from Charleston, by a troop of British soldiers; once again, when nearer his goal, by three Tories, who stopped him to endeavor to obtain some information as to what was going on in the city. Each time, by his boyish assurance, he was enabled to slip through their fingers; and, safe in body and limb, he reached the outposts of Nathaniel Erashaw's fortified camp.

It was with no pleasurable emotion that the patriot captain saw the messenger arrive; and even before the tale was told, he guessed what had brought the boy from the city. When he found that his fears were all verified, he was not long in determining how to assist Vale in the perilous strait in which he was placed.

"I will effect his rescue even though I have to make an attack on Charleston with the men I have around me," said Nat. "I will be in the city to-night."

When morning came, and Sir Henry Clinton had arisen, his first thought was of the young man who, the night before, had been captured as a spy. Accordingly, after breakfast, he had him brought up from the guard cells for examination.

When the stalwart young man made his appearance before the general, that worthy gazed upon him with a look of curiosity. John was still dressed in his disguise, and his clothing evinced marks of a recent struggle. A cut over the right eyebrow, with the blood congealed thereon, showed that he had not yielded himself willingly as a prisoner, and had **only given in at the last moment.**

"I understand that, having come into the city in disguise, you have been apprehended as a spy."

To this salutation Vale merely responded, "So it appears."

"Your name, I believe, is Vale; and you are one of those rebels who are engaged in resisting the laws of the land, in endeavoring to overthrow the legally appointed government, to the great injury of the king and all his peaceably disposed subjects. As a rebel, you were deserving of death by the rope, and being captured acting as a spy, you will most certainly **receive your deserts.**"

Vale kept silent for a moment, as though desirous of hearing the British officer to an end; but finding that some reply was expected, he answered: "As for being a rebel, you and I differ as to what is the true meaning of the word; but this much I can say: I did not enter Charleston as a spy, but on my own private and peculiar business, which could neither be deferred, nor delegated to another. I came for no hostile purpose, and if I hang, a *dozen* Britons will keep me company."

"Indeed! And may we ask how that can be? As you are bold enough to threaten, perhaps you can explain how those threats are to be accomplished."

"I can, and that to your satisfaction. When a company of Dragoons was sent out to capture a number of patriots who were to meet together for the purpose of forming a patriot

brigade, the majority of them met with a sudden death. Some twelve or fourteen of them were spared, however, and my execution will be the signal for theirs."

This answer, given so calmly, took the commander all aback. He could scarcely doubt Vale, for the American spoke with the accent of truth. His contemplated course of action accordingly was changed; Vale was permitted to live for a while at least, and the prisoner was remanded to his place of confinement, while Clinton should make up his mind as to what should be done with him.

The afternoon had worn well on, and John was sitting in his cell, cursing the fate that condemned him to this confinement, when he should be searching high and low for his missing sister. His cogitations were at length broken in upon by the opening of the door, and the keeper entered, followed by Simon Hunt.

"I've brought your brother-in-law here to see you, and give you half an hour for talking; so, whatever business you have, get done with it in a hurry, for it's the last time you'll meet, I'm a thinking."

Thus spoke the jailer, and, departing, he slammed the door behind him, leaving the two alone together.

"This is kind," said John, "coming to see me; but how did you effect an entrance here? Will you not excite suspicion in the minds of the British?"

"Never fear for that. I am pretty well known as a most devoted subject to the king, and were it not that my trade is useful to them, before this I should, doubtless, have been enrolled among the ranks of his supporters. As a relation of your wife's, I persuaded the jailer to admit me. He and I are friends, by the way, and all is right in *that* quarter."

"I suppose, of course, you have some object in this visit?" interrupted Vale, "and whatever it is, it had best be spoken of immediately, for I understood the jailer to say that you had but half an hour."

"What could my object be but to speak of your release from this imprisonment? There is no question about it; if you are left here two days, your death is *certain*. I heard of the answer that you made to Gen. Clinton this morning, and that answer alone preserved your life through the day. Un

less we do something to prevent it, day after to-morrow would scarce see you among the living."

"But what is to be done? Can you effect my rescue from this place? I have thought of nothing but escape all day, but have hit upon no feasible plan as yet. They have even ironed me so that I can not reach the window, and, if I could, those stout iron bars would prevent my exit."

"Supposing they would iron you, I took the liberty to bring you instruments with which you could effect the removal of the fetters, and work away at those iron bars which appear to be so great an impediment to your progress to freedom. Of course you know what *caution* means? and I advise you to use it. Wait till the jailer comes at nine o'clock before you work off the irons. After his visit, you will have plenty of time, and when the hour of three arrives, you may expect me on the outside with a ladder and saw, and, with what you may already have done, I think it will go hard if you are not off and away before sunrise."

John Vale took the file and the little saw which the blacksmith gave him. His face brightened up instantly, and hope nerved him to action again.

"Have you concealment provided for me after I make my exit? There will be a hot search for me, I can tell you. I fear Gen. Clinton less by far than I do the vindictive search that the tory Turner will make."

"If Cedar Swamp will do for a place of concealment, then I think there is one provided for you, impenetrable enough."

"Not so!" responded Vale. "You know that I came to this city for a *purpose*, and, until that purpose has been accomplished, I will *not* leave this place! My sister, if she be in Charleston, must first be found."

"Catherine shall be found. I have a spy engaged in searching for her, and, unless our eyes have been greatly mistaken, we can even now walk right to where she is confined."

"You are indeed my friend," cried Vale, grasping the rough hand of the blacksmith. "Heaven bless you for the concern which you take for one, a total stranger to you!"

"Never think of that, man; you would do the same for any other true patriot that should chance to be in distress. Remember, then, that you are not to use your instruments until

the jailer has gone around for his nightly inspection, and then, at three o'clock in the morning I will be near you. One thing I forgot to tell you—I sent word to Nat Ernsbaw concerning the position in which you were placed, and I should not be surprised if his brigade would, some time before this, have set out toward Charleston. But I hear steps coming down the passage—I suppose my time is up. Good-by, till to-night. Keep a good heart, and you yet can snap your fingers to your heart's content at Gen. Clinton and Timothy Turner."

The door opened; the jailer made his appearance, crying, "Time's up!" Accordingly Hunt took leave of his pretended brother-in-law, and followed the man from the cell, chatting all the while very familiarly with him.

It was near ten o'clock, and Simon Hunt was making up a bundle of those things which he would be likely to want. He all the while hummed to himself snatches of a song much in vogue with the rebel partisans of that day.

"At Bunker Hill we met the foe,
To spoil their calculation;
We knock'd the British to and fro,
And lick'd 'em like tarnation."

Thus the brave-hearted smith was humming, when there came a knocking on the door. Immediately he put an end to his song, and bundled away his things in a great hurry. Opening his door, he saw Nat Ernsbaw before him. Hunt, surprised, said not a word, but drew him into the house, carefully closing the door and securely fastening it. He then said, rather sternly, "I think, Mr. Ernsbaw, that you have acted very rashly in entering Charleston. Your presence here could have been dispensed with, and I only sent you the message with regard to the capture of Mr. Vale, in order that you might be prepared to act with me, as I should hereafter determine."

"I know all that," answered Nat, "but I preferred running the risk and seeing that no stone was left unturned to secure the escape of my friend. According to your wish, my men will be at the designated spot at four o'clock to-morrow morning, and will remain there for about two hours. I would sooner, though, that they could have time to get further away from the city under cover of darkness."

"I would have liked it well enough myself, for I am opposed to running any useless risk; but, to be of any service, they must be there at that time and at no other. The rescue of your friend must be accomplished *to-night*, for it will be too late to-morrow to think of it. But you must stand in need of some refreshment after your journey. Our larder is not overstocked with delicacies, but of plain fare there is a sufficiency."

"I am, to tell the truth, in need of some nourishment, for I have taken little since morning; but I can not rest until my mind is eased on several points. You know, or rather I suppose you know, that John's sister's disappearance was what led him into the city; and I would ask whether he has had any intelligence as to her whereabouts?"

"Make yours self easy on that point," answered Hunt. "She is safe as yet, and this night, if the fates are propitious, you shall see them both."

"Then I am satisfied," said Nat, drawing a great sigh of relief, while he looked his gratitude to Hunt.

The blacksmith's good, willing wife set out a plain repast for Ershaw. He did ample justice to it, for he was fairly faint from hunger and weariness.

When Ershaw had finished his meal, Simon resumed the conversation, saying, "The business upon which we will be engaged this night will be dangerous enough; and of the two things which are to be done, I can scarce tell which is the more so--to rescue John Vale from his prison, garrisoned as it is by British soldiers; or to rescue his sister from Jim Fagg's cottage, garrisoned by any forces which Capt. Preston may have chosen to throw into it. You can have your choice which of the two *you* will attempt."

"In all things I will be governed by you, though, if I were to choose, I would let you see to John, while I might be permitted the *privilege* of bearing away his sister. But you speak confidently, as though your plans were well matured, and there could be no failure. Let me into the secret of your plan of procedure, for I am, as yet, in the dark, and there does not appear to be over much time left for us to do our work in."

"My plans are simple enough and need no explanation. It will take but a few minutes for you to learn them."

CHAPTER XIII.

FOILED.

A fortunate chance seemed about to do for Preston, that which he had been deliberating about, and hesitating whether or no he should have it done. John Vale, having crossed the line of the enemy in disguise, was, according to the laws of war, a spy; and spies, when captured, are always hung. So reasoned Captain Reginald, and his satisfaction was intense. The family which stood between him and a competency would now disappear, sure enough.

The night had worn far on when Reginald, tossing aside the papers on which he had been engaged, for the moment resigned himself to his thoughts. "Let me see," he discoursed to himself; "I must get a glimpse of my little beauty to-night, and see whether or no she will be reasonable. I must keep my temper, though, for it was a shame the way I went off into a passion the last time I saw her. One such exhibition will do more damage than a week's bowing and kisses, and soft whispers, can well repair. I wish my arm was full strong again, for I am more than half afraid to enter single armed into a contest with a mad woman, armed with a heavy water-pitcher! Heavens! What a picture she made! I think I see her now, with her eyes flashing, and her arm thrown back, and I—ha! ha!—well! I adopted as a motto the old proverb that 'discretion is the better part of valor,' and let her alone. Here goes, then, for another visit to my rebel beauty. The hour is so late I wonder if she will be awaiting my coming?" Throwing on his cloak, he issued from his door and trod along the streets which led to Fagan's cottage.

The night could scarce have been better suited to Hunt and his friends. Without raining, the heavy clouds lay in dense banks over the heavens, and it was but occasionally that a star could be seen to twinkle. The heavens were indeed propitious;

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and the lonely, unfrequented streets were unusually dreary and deserted.

As, however, Preston turned a corner, he thought he heard footsteps coming up the street which he had just passed. Turning anxiously behind he could just make out the figures of two men. They seemed to be conversing in whispers, for they leaned closely together. Preston could not hear what they said, and was glad to see them keep on their way up the street without interfering with him.

Waiting until the noise of their footsteps had fully died away, Reginald again pursued his lonely journey, nor stopped until he reached its end. Entering the cottage by means of a key which he carried with him, he closed the door carefully and relocked it; then mounted the stairs.

Soon the sounds of another's footsteps were heard approaching the house and Nat Emshaw, guided by a sign of Simon Hunt's, appeared by the door. Dismalizing the boy, Nat looked around him as well as he could by the extremely faint light. "The window by the sycamore-tree which stands by the porch in front of the house. Then, if my eyes are not deceived, this must be it, and now for Kate." So saying, Nat began the ascent of the tree.

All this Preston did not see, or even think of, for he had made his way to the room in which was confined her whom he sought. A light was burning in the room—it never was suffered to go out; and Kate had been sleeping, but on hearing the noise made by the bolt, she started from the bed, all dressed as she was, and cast a frightened glance toward the door. A sudden arousing from sleep makes cowards even of brave men. What wonder, then, that Kate, a poor weak, defenseless girl, was startled from her presence of mind? Standing erect, without a purpose, speechless and pale, she awaited the pleasure of him who, at this unseasonable hour, broke in upon her slumbers.

"I have come once more on a friendly visit, my own Kate, and though, at an unusual hour, yet as a friend. I know you will receive me kindly even though I intrench upon your time for slumber. Have you entirely recovered from the sudden fit of illness which came upon you when I was last here?"

The cloven hoof *will* show itself, be it ever so nicely concealed; and the purpose of Reginald Preston could not be concealed even by his bland tones. Preston continued:

"To tell the truth to you, however mortifying it may be to me, I am ashamed of myself, and acknowledge that the way in which I acted was reprehensible in the extreme. No man ever gained any thing by getting into a passion, especially with a woman. Having made this apology, I can return to the calm and dispassionate discussion of the subject before us."

The captain spoke in an easy, self-assured manner. Kate was herself again, and she answered in a tone calm but clear and stern: "Mr. Preston, there is nothing to be discussed between us. You have done that which removes you forever beyond the pale of common honesty, a deed most foul; I am to some extent, in your power. You may keep me imprisoned here, but more than that you can never, *dare* never, attempt. I have friends who will find me though they have not the slightest clue to guide their search; and they will, as sure as there is a Heaven above us, avenge to the last, any wrong done to me while I am in your power."

"That you have friends, for the sake of argument, we'll admit; but, if you include your brother in the number, I am afraid you will never see *him* again. He was captured in Charleston last night, is at present in prison, and will be hung to-morrow as a spy."

"Then may God preserve him and me!" answered Catherine, and she sank fainting on the bed beside her. Captain Preston, springing to raise her, was arrested by a voice exclaiming: "And He will!"

Turning, he saw standing in the door, which, through inadvertence, he had neglected to lock, the stalwart frame of Nathaniel Ershaw. "Who are you, who dares to intrude here?" was on his lips, but not uttered; for, as he placed his hand to his sword-hilt, Ershaw sprang forward and planted his flat straight between the eyes of Reginald. The captain fell senseless to the floor. Ershaw gently raised the senseless form of Kate, and called her name. His voice recalled her wandering senses. Opening her eyes, she murmured, "Thank God! I am saved! Saved! make haste away!"

Passing quickly out, and crossing a small hall, Nat and his

fair charge entered another room—the one whose window looked out upon the little porch and the sycamore-tree. The shutters of this room were the only ones about the house which were to be opened. The old negress, who brought to Catherine her meals, occupied this apartment, and obstinately persisted in retaining the privilege of sunshine and fresh air. Through this window, Nat had entered, and finding that the old woman was awake and about making an outcry, he had bound and gagged her.

Letting Kate down from the window by means of a quilt which he had snatched from the bed, Ershaw swung himself down by the branches of the tree. Standing once more on the solid ground he gave a low whistle, which was answered by another from the garden, and young Hunt appeared, leading a horse; a moment more found the young man in the saddle, with Kate in front of him. “Is it time?” he inquired of the boy. “Almost,” was the answer.

“Then here goes for liberty!” half-shouted Ershaw, as he touched the horse lightly with a spur. In a moment he was lost in the blackness of the night.

Acting in obedience to the injunction of the blacksmith, John did not attempt to loosen his irons until the jailer had made his final round. Then, though working without a light, half an hour enabled him, with the aid of the sharp biting file, to throw off the fetters. With a sigh of relief he laid them quietly upon the floor, and stretched his limbs well wearied with the load which they had endured. He next examined the bars that guarded the window by which escape was to be made. The aperture was full large enough to admit of the egress of a man twice as large as Vale were the iron bars once removed; and of these bars there were three.

The saw which John had in his possession, was made from a portion of a watch-spring, and a trial of it convinced him that with a little time he could easily cut through the bars even without the promised assistance of Hunt. The bars were so placed, that if but two of them could be removed, the other would hardly give much trouble; and to the task of removing these two did Vale most assiduously bend himself. By an hour after midnight one of the bars was taken out. By the hour of three, the second bar was more

than half-sawn in two. As the hours wore on, Vale would occasionally pause in his work and listen for some sign from his expected friend. The faint, bell-like notes of a distant clock chiming the expected hour, finally reached him, sounding solemn and still through the midnight night air. The steady movement of the saw ceased for a season, but no sound was heard, and again the nervous arm of the young man continued its task. A faint sound as of something scratching the wall was the signal for work to be discontinued; then, the cheery voice of Simon whispered: "Are you there, John?"

"All right!" answered Vale as he stretched his hand out through the opening to be grasped by the hardy blacksmith.

"You have done better than I thought you would, and if they give us half an hour, or even a quarter, it will go hard but that you once more regain your liberty."

The quarter of an hour was destined to be granted, and, though the work was done noiselessly enough, yet, at the expiration of that time, under the vigorous wrist of the blacksmith the bar was severed.

"Wait a moment," said Simon, "the ladder does not seem to be over-strong and may not bear two of us."

Hunt descended to the ground, and, in a moment more Vale stood beside him. The spot where the two stood was in a garden, upon which one side of the prison looked, and which belonged to one of the most influential men in the city. Making their way carefully along, passing through another garden, they reached an alley. Hunt gave a low whistle, received an answer, and, vaulting over the fence, two horses were found there in waiting, held by a man—his features could not be made out in the darkness.

Vale turned to his companion, in doubt: "Mr. Hunt," said he, "you seem to be well provided. Whose horses are these? Hardly yours, and yet they could hardly have come from the British."

"They are yours as much as mine, though they did not come from the British. They were furnished me by an influential and rich man who has found it necessary to conceal his patriotic proclivities. But into the saddle with you! If Nat Ernsshaw has been successful, there is one waiting for you whom you much long to see."

"My sister?" said John excitedly, as he vaulted into his saddle.

"Yes, your sister; but follow me. I attend you in the ride to-night; and henceforth until this war is ended, and the colonies have gained their independence, I shall be found fighting for my country."

Following close behind, Vale stopped when his guide stopped, and the two remained perfectly silent for a moment. The sound of a horse's steps were distinctly heard. Nearer and nearer they came, then a whistle, to which Hunt replied, and the approaching horseman was soon by the side of the two.

"Thank Heaven it has turned out so well," said Ershaw, and a well-known voice sounded in the ears of Vale, "O John! are you there?"

"Kate!" exclaimed John. "Kate, and safe!"

"Yes! safe and saved!"

Ershaw had ridden close up to John, and the fair young girl stretched out her hand to her brother. Lifting her from her place, he seated her in front of his saddle, and printed a kiss with all a brother's affection upon her cheek. "This street is no place for explanations," said Hunt. "We must be far away before morning comes. We have many miles to ride before we can say we are in safety."

"On then!" said John. "Here is a light heart fit for the dark night! Hurrah!" burst from his lips.

"Are you crazy, man?" said Hunt, "to thus run the risk of arousing the sentinels on the lines? We are not yet beyond their hearing; and a word might be fatal to us all."

"That's true," answered Ershaw; "but, I own I would like to give one good *whoop* as a parting salutation."

"Now for it, boys!" exclaimed Hunt as he led the way in the early morning dinness, for the darkness was lifting its trailing robes, and the morning was streaking the east with its golden arrows.

Away, post house, sentinels, barriers following the lead of Simon Hunt, sped the fugitives; through the early hour that preceded the morning, through the misty light of day-breaking, into the full glories of the morning; and hard behind rode Reginald Preston with his troop of dragoons. Certainly no

more than ten minutes' start had the patriots—and fairly flying in the pursuit came the British captain, his heart wild with rage and a burning desire to wreak its revenge. That blow burned upon his forehead like fire; his prisoned bird, caught with so much care and money, again was free—the thought of these awoke all the mad energy of his wicked nature. He would have the fugitives, or die!

Hastening on, Ernschaw wished only to meet with his men. Whether or no there was pursuit, he could not, as yet, tell; but this he felt assured of: once with his company, he would not be afraid to turn and face any force that would be sent for his capture, or rather for the recapture of John Vale. With the first flush of early light, came to the ears of the flying the sounds of pursuit. The company of Reginald rode hard, and a company of fifty horsemen, going at full speed, made no slight noise.

"They come!" cried Ernschaw, as he heard the sounds.

Kate said nothing, but clung tighter to her brother.

"Let them come," responded Hunt. "Another mile will see us in safety, unless some unforeseen accident may chance to occur. Five minutes' riding should bring us to the brigade, and with the start which we have, they can not come up with us in that time."

"On! on!" exclaimed Vale; and in silence the flight was continued.

The sounds behind became more distinct, as more brightly the morning broke above them. On the brow of a hill, Hunt turned partly round and glanced behind. Half a mile away he could distinguish the forms of horsemen riding recklessly on, gaining at almost every stride. Ten minutes more, at the pace they were going, would bring them within pistol-shot distance. Would that ten minutes bring them to Ernschaw's brigade?

Down the hill Simon spurred his horse, the others keeping close company; but the animal which John Vale bestrode was beginning to lag, for it carried double weight.

"Thank Heaven! we are safe!" exclaimed Hunt; and "Safe!" ejaculated Ernschaw, as, at the distance of but a few hundred yards, a dozen of the patriot troopers could be seen standing by the sides of their saddled steeds. A wild hurrah

burst from these men as they saw their captain and his friend appear, all unharmed. At the cheer, from the wood which stood by the road side, or rather through which the road passed, a score or more of men emerged and joined their shouts with those of their comrades. A moment more, and the four were in the midst of the patriot brigade.

Forty hands were stretched out toward Nathaniel and Vale, and forty lips clamored forth congratulations.

"I accept your congratulations," said Nat, "but this is no time for words. Hard behind me rides a large force of British dragons. They may outnumber us by ten or a dozen men, but we can easily crush them at a blow. What say ye, men? Shall we fight or retreat?"

A scornful laugh ran around the circle. "Fight! fight! Down with the Britishers—the miscreants—dogs!"

"Then back into the woods with you, and we will attack them as they come up." In a moment, from the road, not an American was in sight. "I want some one," continued Ershaw, when they were fairly under cover, "for a duty that will be both pleasant and unpleasant; some one who is well enough acquainted with the country to guide Miss Vale to a place of safety, in case any thing disastrous should happen to us. Of course he can not mix in with the fight."

"The person for that is the boy that came to us yesterday mornin'. I see now that he is with you. After his fifty miles of ridin', I guess he wouldn't be of much use in a scrimmage, but he'll do as well as a man for the lady," said one of the men.

"You are right," replied Nat. "Simon is worthy of the trust." So, calling forward the boy, he gave him his instructions.

Hurrying onward with unabating speed, Captain Preston and his company drew nigh to the spot where the brigade stood under close cover, all ready for the fray.

"Now, boys, at them!" rang in the ears of the startled British.

But their quick reply was a discharge of pistols, and their balls rattled like hail among the tree-limbs overhead. Instantly from among the trees flashed Nat Ershaw's troopers—each man grasping in his strong hand his trusty sword.

The battle which followed can scarcely be described. There is an appalling sublimity in a hand-to-hand conflict, when life or death is in the issue. Whether the conflict be on a larger or smaller scale, the same fierce elements are excited—the same personal results follow. As fierce the individual strife between a hundred as between a thousand times one hundred.

Blended together, horse to horse, arm to arm, sword to sword, each man shouting his war-cry—each man hewing fiercely, the hundred struggled, and pointed, and strove for victory, without one thought of death.

“Down with the rebel hounds!” shouted Preston.

“Show the millions no quarter!” answered Nat, in a voice like thunder.

In the midst of the British, fighting with the fierceness to which a despairing, cowardly heart can sometimes be goaded, was Turner.

Twice did John Vale urge his horse in the direction of the tory, and twice was he prevented from reaching him. Though blows fell fast around, yet the two seemed to bear a charmed life, and the strife continued, leaving them still unhurt. Again did Vale press forward. Suddenly he felt a strange sensation creep over him; his sight became dimmed, his head appeared to be whirling round and round, and he fell from his horse.

But if John Vale was down, a score and a half of stout, unflinching, maddened patriots were not. One Briton after another fell, until scarce fifteen left, they broke and fled.

Mounted on horseback, with young Hunt on foot beside her, Catherine hastened on. Passing through the woods for some distance, the road, turning, crossed their way, and the two kept on in the beaten path. Kate's heart was beating wildly enough with suspense. The first volley of pistol shots was heard quite plainly by her; after that the sounds of battle came but indistinctly—soon nothing was to be heard.

Almost unconsciously Kate had reined in her horse, and sat there, though waiting to hear news of the fight. How long she thus remained, she could hardly have told; it must have been for some minutes, for the boy seemed to think the delay too long.

“Come, miss,” said he, “if I am to take charge of you, I would rather have you further off from the spot we have just

left. "There's no telling what *may* happen, and, although I want to see our side whip, you can't have every thing as you want it. Best to be moving along, I guess."

The advice was good, but it came rather late. Around the bend of the road, from underneath the overhanging boughs, came a flying horseman. Hatless and bleeding, his locks disheveled and his face all distorted with anger and fear, one could scarce recognize the once gallant-looking Captain Preston. Catherine Vale did, and right good reason had she to do so. With a cry of terror she drew up her reins and struck the horse with her foot to urge him into a run.

Onward thundered the trooper; and behind him, but a few rods, still grasping a sword, came Timothy Turner.

The eye of Reginald fell upon Kate.

"Ha! ha!" he shouted; "found once more!"

Driving his spurs deep into his horse, he increased his speed. The young boy, Simon, endeavored to sweep Reginald from his saddle by a blow from his stick; but, ere it descended, the captain flung at him a discharged pistol. The aim was true: it struck the lad upon the breast and felled him to the ground. Catherine's sword, though a good one, was no match for the high-bred animal which the captain beset; and at every stride the distance between them was lessened. Far behind, like an avenging fury, came Nat Ernsaw, but too far distant to afford assistance now.

With a great bound, the horse of the captain was placed side by side with that of the flying girl. He caught her bridle in his grasp.

"Mine! mine once more!" he shouted. "Found again and forever!"

Loud came the shouts of the pursuers—Nat Ernsaw and a dozen men drew near.

One glance behind, then Preston checked his speed. "If not for me in life, then be it in death!"

Drawing his sword, all stained with blood, Reginald poised the weapon, for a moment, then seizing the girl by the throat, he raised the messenger of death, shouting, "Good-by, Kate! Cousin Kate!"

With closed eyes and outstretched hands, Catherine awaited the blow. She heard a crashing sound; the grasp on her

throat was loosened; then came the noise of a heavy fall. Bewildered she beheld Capt. Preston lying on the road, his head cleft down to the very jaw, while by her side, with a saber dripping with the still liquid life's blood, stood the tory, Timothy Turner. Blood was slowly trickling from a badlet wound in his breast, and his face was ghostly pale; but, from underneath his lowering brows, his dark eye gleamed with a bright light.

"I am dying," he muttered, as he rolled from his horse, staggering to the green bank which margined the road.

With a brain all awlirl with wonder and doubt, Kate surveyed the tory. Involuntarily she turned her panting, trembling horse to one side, and drew near to the man as he lay there; the life-blood gurgling forth at every quick pant, the pallid countenance upturned to her with a wistful look. She saw the lips move, and bent down in her saddle.

"Will you listen to a dying man?" he faintly asked.

"Whatever you have to say, tell it quickly," she answered.

"Do not let your friends murder me. I shall die soon. Come nearer."

Catherine felt herself greatly moved. "Fear not," she said, and lightly sprang from her saddle. As she touched the ground, Nat Ernsbaw and his men thundered up. "Harm him not!" almost commanded Catherine. "He has saved my life and is dying. Touch him not, I say!" The men were eager to saber him, it was plain.

"We will not," replied Nat; and Kate bent over the dying man.

"I'm going," said Turner, speaking hoarsely and quickly. "It's hard, but it must be. It isn't much for you to do, but I want you to say you forgive me."

"For what?"

"It was me that carried you off." Turner saw the fire flash in those eyes, and he continued, "I've been wicked—I loved money—but I loved you better and stronger than any thing else. It's the only good in me, but that was made bad enough when your brother turned me out of the house. I hated him and Ernsbaw. But I didn't mean to let Preston harm you. I would have stolen you from him again. I was near when he was. If I could have made up my mind, I

could have given the alarm when you first escaped. I loved you and myself, and hated every one else. Say you forgive me. I have done great wrong, but I'm sorry. Will you forgive?"

Touched more by his tone, so piteously pleading, than by his words, Catherine answered: "I do."

"Let me take your hand," he murmured.

She gave it to him without hesitation. Turner grasped it, pressed it to his lips, and died with the slight effort.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HAPPY CONSUMMATION.

When Ernshaw returned from the pursuit of Preston and the tory, he found several of the men standing over John Vale, anxiously feeling his breast to see if the breath of life was still left within him. His heart very faintly fluttered, though he lay in a state of utter unconsciousness.

That night Mrs. Vale found beneath her roof, once again, her children; Catherine safe, John dangerously, though not necessarily mortally wounded. For a time his life was held by a feeble thread; but, through a strong constitution and good care, he slowly regained his health and strength.

How in the Carolinas a partisan warfare was waged; how Marion and Sumpter and many other brave hearted commanders made themselves a terror to the British and tories; how the spirit of freedom could never be quenched, but continued to be made manifest in the midst of the most trying circumstances and the most perilous positions—all this is well-known to the student of American history. For the year following the events just described, Nat Ernshaw's brigade did noble service in its country's cause. Sometimes by themselves, again in conjunction with other patriot bands, they swooped down upon a tory gathering, or cut off a detachment of British soldiers. Now here, now there, they but seldom remained long in one place; but Cedar Swamp was ever a rendezvous

to which they retired. Here they would take up their quarters at intervals of some weeks, and lie perfectly quiet until intelligence reached them of some occasion where a blow could be struck; then from this spot, like lightning from a thunder cloud, the fires of freedom flashed forth.

Through all the hand-to-hand conflicts, Wild Nat passed safely. A sword stroke on the brow had left a scar, but the wound was not dangerous, for his own blade had carried death to his enemy, and thus paralyzed his well aimed blow. John Vale, too, was fortunate. While more than one brave comrade fell beside him, he remained untouched. His first wound was his last. As being the best fitted to devise and carry out the campaign, the men placed most implicit confidence in these two. That confidence was never abused.

From the time when Catherine Vale re-entered the walls of her mother's house, that house was never disturbed. Though houses might blaze around them, and the homesteads of others be desolated, yet was the dwelling of Mrs. Vale unmolested.

At length came an event which filled every true American's heart with joy. The dark pall which had so long been stretched over the State was lifted. On the 19th of October, 1781, Lord Cornwallis with seven thousand men, surrendered to the American army under General Washington. No event in the history of any nation was ever hailed with more grateful joy than was this. Though the British were still masters of Charleston and Savannah, yet it had the effect of doing away with the necessity of partisan warfare; and marauding bands of Tories, and pillaging troops of soldiers were no longer to be met wandering through the States.

The Tories, seeing that the war must soon end—and end in the success of the colonies—ceased to rant of the divine right of kings, and began to consider that perhaps it would be best to keep their fingers from off the property of their whig neighbors. They therefore became a source of no further anxiety to the patriots.

Though willing to meet together at any time for the defense of their country, the men of Nat Ernsbaw's brigade disbanded each one returning to his home.

Winter passed and summer came again. The war was virtually at an end, and though the city was still retained by the British, yet no blood had been shed for some time.

It was a moonlight evening in July, and a pleasant breeze swept softly through the branches of the old pear tree which stood near the dwelling of Mrs. Vale.

On a seat under the tree sat Nat Ershaw and Catherine Vale; at their feet an old friend, the dog Lion, who appeared to regard the two with a look of grave curiosity. Sitting under the tree there, with the pale light of the moon shining down upon them, the three made a picture. Nat Ershaw, with his fine, manly countenance, weather-beaten and marked with a single scar upon his brow, and that more than half-hidden by his hair; Catherine Vale, with her fair face, golden hair, and loving eyes; Lion, huge as he was, looking pleasant as he gazed up into the face of his mistress.

Tenderly taking the hand of his companion, Ershaw, after a momentary silence, said:

"There is something, Kate, of which I have long wished to speak, but the distracted state of the country prevented my doing so. For years—almost from the hour of our first acquaintance—no true man could say that his head sat firmly upon his shoulders. Life has been, at the most, held on slender tenure, and hearthstones have been desecrated on short notice. Now it is, I think, otherwise. The struggle for freedom is all but ended; independence is placed within our grasp, and with an assurance which I could not otherwise feel, I can speak my feelings and wishes. I love you, Kate. Not with a fierce passion, but with a hopeful, manly, lasting love. We have known each other long and, I think, well. Such as I am you see me. I profess not to be free from faults, nor to be wholly made up of virtues. From the fullness of an unchecked spirit I have done things which to others might seem wrong; but they were sins of the head, not of the heart. I can offer you a hand, a home, and a *heart*. Knowing me as you do, having tried my affection as you have, will you be mine?"

For some moments Catherine did not reply, but sat gazing on the ground. Though she had often done so before, she wished again to analyze her heart, and scrutinize closely,

calmly, the feelings which she felt she entertained for Nathaniel.

Under this very tree, two years ago, had Reginald Preston pleaded his love. What an issue that profession brought forth! She recalled her abduction—her solitary confinement—the horrid threats of the British captain—Ernshaw's daring—his striking down of the wretch, and his rescue of her—the dying declaration of Turner; all these incidents came up again before her, and though they touched her heart with a sense of sadness, how they all pleaded for the man at her side!

"I have been thinking," she at length calmly said, "as I have, I acknowledge, thought before, of you and your claim upon me. We have known each other long, and have reason to believe that we know each other truly. I have looked into my heart, and find that it fully and entirely responds to your own in its hopes, wishes, love, and confidence. I say then, in all the truth of my own soul, that I love you as a woman should love the man she would claim as her husband, and that, as far as my consent goes, my hand and heart are yours. **I will be your wife, Nathaniel.**"

Catherine's manner was deliberate, unimpassioned; but her whole being stood looking from her eyes, and her sweet face lit up like a morning in June. Ernshaw's strong nature had met its entire response.

When the patriot captain that night took his leave, he printed, for the first time, upon the lips of Catherine the holy kiss of plighted troth.

The next evening Nat Ernshaw came to the cottage, and told his love to Mrs. Vale in a straight-forward, manly way. Catherine had told her all, during the day, and received her parent's blessing upon her love. For Nathaniel she now entertained a real, undisguised affection, and answered his petition for the hand of Catherine in a cordial consent.

"Take her, Nathaniel; she is a precious treasure. Keep her sacredly," was all she could say.

Mrs. Vale's house is all astir. Lights flash all over it, and glad sounds issue from within. That night will see both son and daughter of the respected widow enter into the bonds of wedlock; a double wedding is to occur at the house.

To describe the ceremony, to tell how the brides were dressed, and who were the bridesmaids—to recapitulate all the songs that were sung, all the speeches that were made, all the toasts that were drunk, would quite exceed the limits of this little story. Let it suffice to aver that two handsomer couples had never been united since Carolina became a State, and that a happier evening was never known, even to that mythic person, the "oldest inhabitant."

About a week after the wedding, John Vale's mother received a letter, the contents of which rather surprised her. The communication read as follows:

"RESPECTED MADAM:—As relict of the late John Vale, son of Charles Vale, M. P., recently deceased, we would beg leave to inform you that the heir or heirs of the said John Vale are entitled to a fortune of twenty-seven thousand, three hundred and odd pounds, sterling. Although there is little danger of any one disputing your right, yet it will be necessary to have a competent person to look after your interests. May we hope that your patronage will go to our firm. We will write further in a few days.

Yours, respectfully,

"THOMPSON, SMITH & Co., *per* SMITH."

Though Messrs. Thompson, Smith & Co., were sharp to ferret out business, they were also faithful when that business demanded a severe discharge of duty. Through their exertions, the fortune of the "recently deceased Charles Vale" was secured to its rightful owners.

Justice will not be defeated. Though Reginald put his shoulder to the wheel of fate, and strove to push it backward, yet for all his boldness and sincerity he was crushed. That for which he toiled, and made himself a villain, the gold of his relative, passed into worthier hands, and his very name became synonym of whatever was bad.

For years, annually did Nat Emshaw gather around him in a grand reunion, the former members of the brigade; and to these reunions always came Simon Hunt. No longer Simon the blacksmith. A self-educated man, he was at once true citizen, an upright man, a clear-headed adviser. The States, just escaped from the despotism of foreign and reckless rulers, needed just such men to assist in their councils. Was

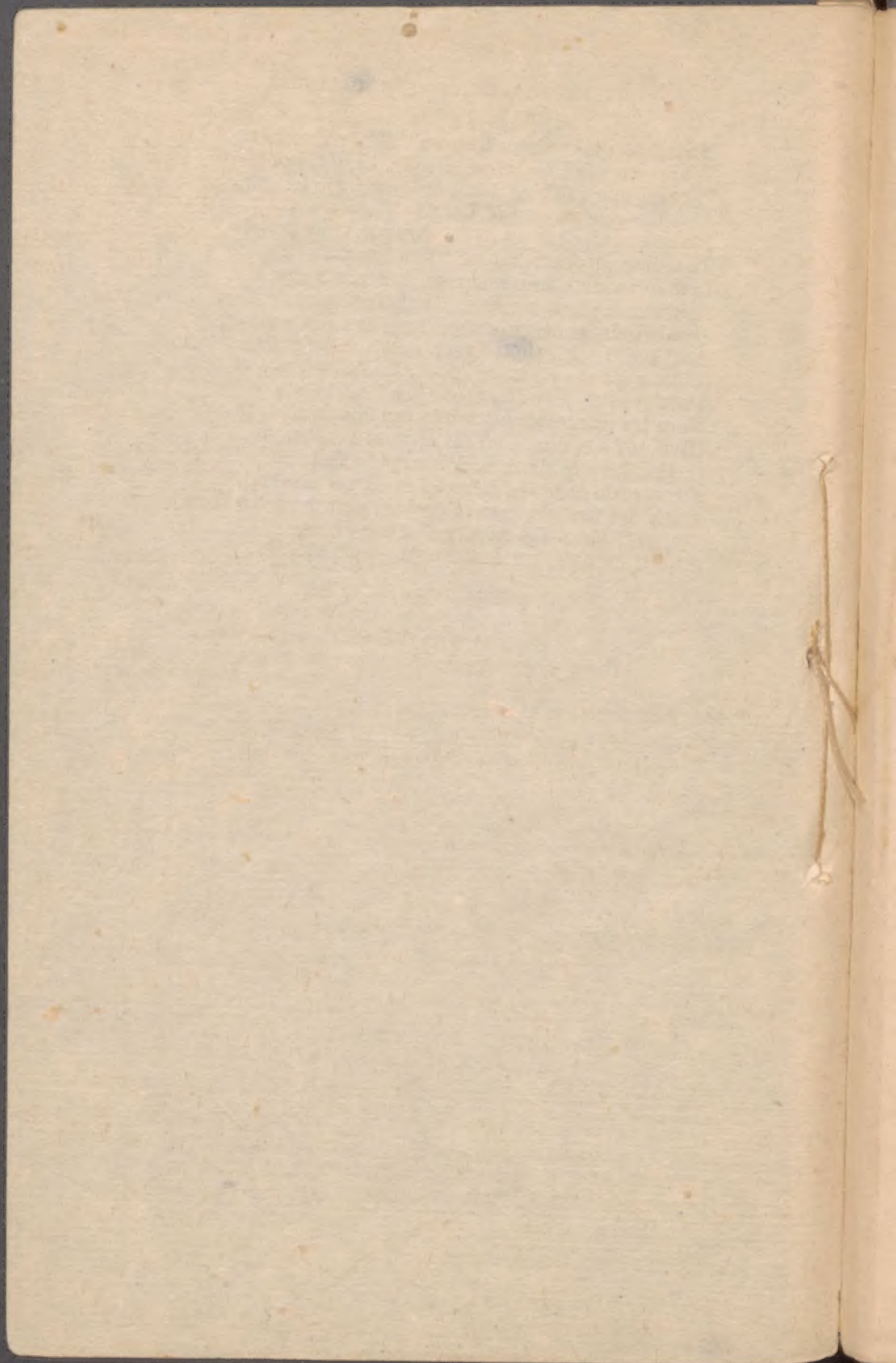
It any wonder then, that at one of their reunions Nat Ernsley introduced the once plain blacksmith as "the Hon. Simon Hunt?"

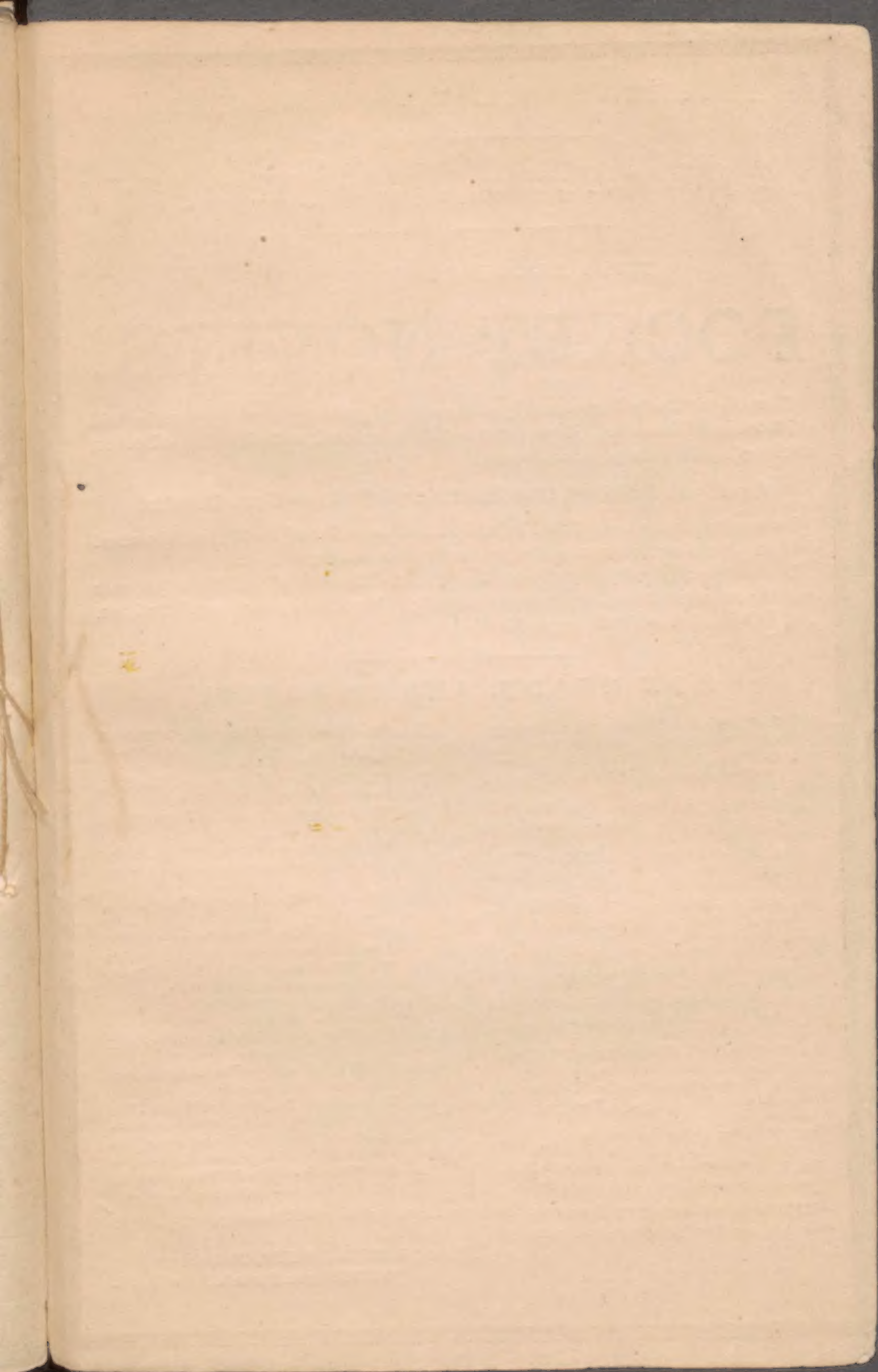
Under the green turf of Carolina now rest the brave men who once composed Wild Nat's brigade. Truer hearts never beat, more patriotic bosoms never swelled with the inspiration of liberty. Long in the memories of descendants shall they live, these veritable heroes of the Revolution. Over their graves let us give them our benedictions, and with Percival say:—

Here rest the great and good. Here they repose
After their generous toil. A sacred band,
They take their sleep together, while the year
Comes with its early flowers to deck their graves,
And gathers them again, as Winter frowns.
Theirs is no vulgar sepulcher,—green sods
Are all their monument, and yet it tells
A nobler history than pillared piles,
Or the eternal pyramids. They need
No statue nor inscription to reveal
Their greatness. It is round them; and the joy
With which their children tread the hallowed ground
That holds their venerated bones, the peace
That smiles on all they fought for, and the wealth
That clothes the land they rescued,—these, though mute,
As feeling ever is when deepest,—these
Are monuments more lasting than the fanes
Reared to the kings and demigods of old.

Touch not the ancient elms, that bend their heads
Over their lowly graves; beneath their bough:
There is a solemn darkness, even at noon,
Suited to such as visit at the shrine
Of serious liberty. No factious voice
Called them unto the field of generous fame,
But the pure consecrated love of home.
No deeper feeling sways us, when it wakes
In all its greatness. It has told itself
To the astonished gaze of awestruck kings,
At Marathon, at Bannockburn, and here,
Where first our patriots sent the invader back,
Broken and cowed. Let these green elms be left
To tell us where they fought and where they lie
Their feelings were all nature, and they need,

No art to make them known. They live in us,
While we are like them, simple, hardy, bold,
Worshiping nothing but our own pure hearts,
And the one universal Lord. They need
No column pointing to the heaven they sought,
To tell us of their home. The heart itself,
Left to its own free purpose, hastens there,
And there alone reposes. Let these elms
Bend their protecting shadow o'er their graves,
And build with their green roof the only fane,
Where we may gather on the hallowed day
That rose to them in blood, and set in glory.
Here let us meet, and while our motionless lips
Give not a sound, and all around is mute
In the deep sabbath of a heart too full
For words or tears, here let us strew the sod
With the first flowers of spring, and make to them
An offering of the plenty Nature gives,
And they have rendered ours—perpetually.





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